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GREAT WALKS

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AUSTRALIA'S BUSHWALKING MAGAZINE

BUCKET LIST & BEYOND

Winter Overland Track
Green Gully Track
Wineglass Bay Sail Walk
Italian Dolomites
Heysen Trail

HOW TO

Pack your rucksack
Read a weather map
Use a GPS

WEEKEND WILDERNESS

Sydney's best two-day walks

ON THE BOIL

Manu vs Kokoda

GREAT
WALKING
DESTINATIONS

Murchison Gorge Trek, Onkaparinga River NP,
Ballina to Lennox Head, Buller Huts Trail,
Lavender Federation Trail

APRIL_MAY 2019

AUSWALK ANNOUNCES FIRST TRIPS IN NEW AUSTRALIA-LAND!

They kept their distance for 119 years but now the Zoolanders have come back to the fold, sorry, 'Zealanders' (it's been a while) we've decided to go exploring.



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Australia-Land*



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Editor

Brent McKean
P: 02 9213 8274
brentmckean@yaffa.com.au

Advertising

Bobby Butler
P: 02 9213 8265
M: 0405 594 303
bobbybutler@yaffa.com.au

Subscriptions

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Contact

Publisher Mike Ford
Managing Director Tracy Yaffa
Advertising Production Luke Buckley
Production Director Matthew Gunn
Art Director Ana Maria Heraud
Studio Manager Lauren Esdaile
Designer Lauren Esdaile
Customer Service Manager
Martin Phillpott
Marketing Manager Sabarinah Elijah
Marketing Executive Emilie McGree

Contributors

Caro Ryan, Georgina Walsh, John Austin,
John Chapman, Kate Legge, Lauren Jones,
Lyndsey Vivien, Marcus O'Dean,
Mick Fletoridis, Sarah Stackman,
Simon Cameron, Simon Trayhorn

Great Walks is published by

Yaffa Media Pty Ltd
ABN 54 002 699 354
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Brent and Matilda on a recent holiday to England's Lake District.



LITTLE THINGS TO BIG THINGS

YOU would have heard of “Keeping up with the Joneses”, but there are two Joneses you may struggle keeping up with: Justin and Lauren Jones who took their then six-month-old baby Morgan on an 1800km walk through the Outback. It's an extraordinary feat that started like most adventures, by someone simply wishing to make a change: “While I loved this little person more than my heart could hold, amidst the sleep deprivation, baby routines and constant responsibility, Justin and I found ourselves missing our independence and mourning our freedom to just head out the door and do what we like,” writes Lauren (pg45). “I yearned for wildness, for adventure and not just in the gated confines of an urban kids’ playground...”

Of course not all dreams have to be so extreme. My dream is simply to see my kids taking to the outdoors like I did – like all of you did. As I'm writing this I'm planning on taking my daughter Matilda (9) on her first overnight bushwalk. She's excited but a little scared. The great unknown can be scary but she knows she's going with me and any fears will quickly disappear as we spend time with nature.

In this issue we've got plenty to get you outdoors. Be it a day walk (pg34, 44, 57 and 60), a weekend

away (pg92) or something bigger, like doing a bucket list walk (pg24).

We also have a post-Valentine's love story between two outdoors people (pg82). In the early 1900s Gustav Weindorfer and Kate Cowle met, went bushwalking, fell in love and lived an amazing life in Tasmania. In *Kindred: A Cradle Mountain Love Story*, journalist Kate Legge writes about these two passionate people and how they were instrumental in turning Cradle Mountain into a national park and pioneering eco-tourism.

“Gustav's enthusiasm bubbled in geyser spurts as he drew on their experience of Mt Buffalo to imagine how this great wilderness could be shared, for tourism, for science, for all,” Kate writes in her book. “He tossed around ideas for a national park, an accommodation hostel, one idea on top of the other like the boulders of the crag they stood upon, overtaken by the urge to showcase what they could see, not simply for profit or personal gain, since their appreciation of the natural sciences dampened hubristic ambition in favour of the universal benefits. The view was sublime, but far above the picturesque sway of this place was their sense of the knowledge embedded here.”

Happy walking
Brent McKean

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Lyndsey Vivien
Lyndsey is a plant ecologist based in Melbourne who enjoys searching out botanical treasures on her bushwalks.



Lauren Jones
Lauren is a corporate speaker and sustainability advocate, and with her husband and baby went on an Outback odyssey.



Simon Cameron
Simon, is a retired Adelaide Doctor who has bushwalked and climbed in every state and territory and both islands of NZ.



John Austin
Journalist and keen coastal/bushwalker John recently glamped the Flinders Ranges and final leg of the Camino de Compostela.



TENTERFIELD, NSW

Tenterfield sits high on the New England Tableland in northern NSW, surrounded by a rugged and scenic landscape of well-watered forests and woodlands. The region has two World Heritage National Parks, both of which boast some of the oldest vegetation types in Australia. The World Heritage listing bestowed on these parks is testimony to their significance as places of great natural and cultural value.

For bushwalkers there's plenty to see and do. Bald Rock NP is named after a massive granite dome 750m long and 500m wide, rising 260m above the surrounding bushland, making it the largest exposed granite rock in the Southern Hemisphere. Another stunning national park is Boonoo Boonoo (pron: 'bunna bunoo' – Aboriginal for 'big rocks'), a woodland park with spectacular river and gorge scenery. nationalparks.nsw.gov.au



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“THE MEAL AND VIEWS WERE EXCELLENT – AND IT WAS HARD TO IMAGINE ALL OF THIS WAS ONCE THE SCENE OF SOME OF THE BLOODIEST FIGHTING IN WWI.”



WALK & TALK

Great Walks readers share their news and views



Movie magic

I love the story in your last issue about movies that inspire you to travel (GRW Feb-Mar, *Lights, Camera, Action!*). A couple of favourite films that inspired me to travel – and I just love watching them – are *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) and *The Endless Summer* (1966). Thanks for a great mag!

Michael Pierce

*Hi Michael, just between you and me the movie that inspired me to leave New Zealand in 1988 and come to Australia was *The Coolangatta Gold* (1984) but shhh don't tell anyone. I'd never live it down! – Ed*

Mountains of fun

My wife and I recently returned from the Snowy Mountains walking trip. I was fortunate to win my trip through *Great Walks*



Mount Field NP, Tas. Chris Crerar



THIS MONTH'S WINNING LETTER

Credit where credit's due

I have subscribed and enjoyed *Great Walks* for some years, and have just subscribed again. I am intrigued by the cover photo on the Dec-Jan 2019 issue, and would love to know where it is. There is no clue, even in the article on page 61, etc. I notice you sometimes reveal the location. I suspect it is in Tassie.

Bernard Jordan

Hi Bernard, I normally caption and credit the cover photo but to be honest, I just plain forgot. The photo was supplied by Wild Pedder (wildpedder.com.au), taken by Chris Crerar and it was taken at Mount Field NP in Tassie. – Ed

and my wife decided to join me. We wanted to send our thanks as we thoroughly enjoyed the walks with Park Trek (parktrek.com.au). It was unseasonably warm but that didn't detract from the beauty of the area. The guides were knowledgeable and great cooks!

Thanks again.

Peter Mason

Hi Peter, the pleasure was all ours! We love giving away walking holidays around the country – and even overseas. Check out pg31 for our latest comp. – Ed

Poles apart

A friend has suggested that Pacer Poles (pacerpole.com) may be better for bushwalkers than traditional walking poles. I have tried to find recent evidenced based research for use of any sort of poles without much success. Is this something you could research?

Megan Major

Hi Megan, I received a pair of Pacer Poles from the British manufacturers about 10 years ago and took them on a few bushwalks. I must admit I wasn't a fan as I couldn't get

used to the placement on my hands on the poles. Saying that I did receive emails from people who loved them. I don't know if they are better than other poles – it's pretty subjective to be honest. Pacer claims the anatomically designed left and right poles promote better hand placement and therefore better hiking posture. The best way to test this out is to try out a pair of Pacers then try out pair of traditional poles and see which are most comfortable for you. – Ed

THE WRITE STUFF

Each month, the person with the winning letter takes home a **PETZL Bindi headlamp valued at \$100**. The super-compact, ultralight headlamp is ideal for overnight and multi-day bushwalks.

More info:
spelean.com.au



CONTACT US

Email editor@
great-walks.com.au
or post letters to:
Great Walks,
GPO Box 606,
Sydney NSW 2001

On the cover:
Borgafjordur, Iceland.



Left: Snowy Mountans, NSW.
Peter Mason

IN THE ELEMENTS

Glenn Vertigan faces all four seasons on the Overland Track

THE Overland Track is on many a bushwalker's bucket list and I had the chance to experience it with a bunch of mates over summer... so it should have been nice weather, right...?

We left Ronny's Creek with a strong wind in our face and driving rain. We had a snack behind Kitchen Hut (it was full of people getting out of the weather) and then the weather really took a turn for the worse. We put all our wet gear on and headed off. We couldn't see the top of Cradle Mountain, but the scenery was still spectacular. We stayed in the smaller hut at Waterfall Valley and I realised not only am I battling the cold, but snorers as well!

We headed off the next morning via Lake Will. I saw the sign about currawongs and how they get into packs. Yeah, we'll be right... We got back and sure enough, Steve's pack was undone and stuff was everywhere. Lesson learnt. We arrived at Lake Windermere and after an extremely cold dip in the lake we decided our tent instead of the hut was the best place for a sleep!

Day three was walked in drizzly rain all the way to Pelion Hut. We still appreciated the amazing scenery and we were particularly taken with our lunch stop at the Forth River. My grandfather's ashes were scattered in the Forth River many years ago so it was good to stop and reflect. The rain cleared for a great view of Mt Oakley before bed.

Climbing Mt Ossa was the goal for day four. However, as we arrived at Pelion Gap, we realised it wasn't happening. There was snow at the top, and the wind had really picked up. In fact within



minutes of finishing lunch sleet and driving wind meant that staying on the track was a big effort. My hands were burning with the cold and at Kia Ora hut, the ranger reckoned with the wind chill it was around 4°C. It was an interesting but good spirited night with 20 or so walkers crammed into the smallest hut on the walk.

The next day was the highlight of the walk. We had the rain but this also meant the waterfalls were exploding. They were spectacular and we stayed for a good chunk of the morning checking them out. And our final night was spent in the most luxurious hut of all... Bert Nichols. That night, we completed our final card game of 'warlords and scumbags'.

The final day – and yes! – beautiful sunny weather and no wind. It was a wonderful way to finish what was an exciting adventure. There were some great views before crossing the suspension bridge and too soon the walk ended at Narcissus Hut. Then it was time to dry our wet gear before the ferry trip across Lake St Clair. What a brilliant six days. If it's not on your bucket list, it should be. 🌀

(It's on ours! See pg 24 – Ed)

WIN A JACK WOLFSKIN SIERRA TRAIL JACKET

The Sierra Trail is an ultra-lightweight (440gm/ \$399.95) weatherproof men's shell jacket with a very compact pack size. It is made of Texapore Ecophere – a soft, lightweight recycled fabric that is 100% waterproof and windproof, and extremely breathable. The Sierra Trail is ideal for outdoor activities in milder weather. And it also makes a good everyday jacket. Features include pit zips positioned on the back of the arm for improved freedom of movement. jack-wolfskin.com.au

To enter, send us your best hiking yarn – 450 words plus three high quality images. Email: editor@greatwalks.com.au



SOLE TO BARE

After years of hiking in the same boots, Fiona Butterworth realises nothing lasts forever.

I bought my hiking boots from a well-known outdoor store in 2004 when I joined a bushwalking club and started seriously hiking. I wanted a pair of boots that would give me comfort and support on graded trails and off track and the brand I bought fitted the bill. Spending many days traversing the Mount Lofty Ranges walking sections of the Heysen, Kidman, and Yurrebilla trails, I wore my boots in. I learnt to orienteer and was soon enjoying walking off track and rock scrambling. Walking day or night, in the heat or cold wet rain, my trusty bushwalking boots were always on my feet.

My boots and I embarked upon my biggest hiking challenge to date, walking the World Heritage listed Overland Track from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair with my hiking group. We were doing the track full pack carrying in/out all our gear and supplies resulting in 15kg packs at the start. I was grateful for my boots, worn in and comfortable enabling me to walk 65km over six days without a single complaint.

As with many adventures, the realities of life can get in the way. I moved interstate and made new friends and became involved in other fitness pursuits. My beloved boots sat in the back of my wardrobe for four years, patiently waiting for their next great adventure. At the start of this year when I moved house I came across my boots and was flooded with memories of all the



great walks we had together. I had an epiphany; here I was living on the Gold Coast with World Heritage listed rainforests on my doorstep that I had yet to explore.

I put on my old faithfuls and started hiking again beginning with day walks in the Springbrook National Park. I felt invigorated to be bushwalking again and had planned with a friend to do the Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk from Lamington National Park to Springbrook. My last training hike was a short half-day trip to the Cougals involving rock scrambling. I'd barely started the walk when I noticed the left sole of my boot was starting to come away. I taped it up but the terrain of the steep uphill walk and rock scrambling eventually took its toll on my old worn boots.

By the time I started back downhill both boots were taped. I was devastated. I had thoughts of going to the local shoe repair and getting my soles glued back on. I would have tried anything to salvage them. In the end I had to face the inevitable, they were gone. They had given me some great years, taken me on many adventures and some of the best memories of my life. My next pair of boots will be the same brand, for me they have passed every test as a bushwalker I could have thrown at them! 🌀

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JACKET**

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jack-wolfskin.com.au

To enter, send us your best hiking yarn – 450 words plus three high quality images. Email: editor@greatwalks.com.au



Have you got a fond memory of a beloved piece of bushwalking kit? Tell us! Email: editor@greatwalks.com.au

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AT HOME OUTDOORS



GOOD NEWS WEEK

There's plenty going on in your world of bushwalking

WORLD EXPEDITIONS HAS received approval to proceed with its application to erect semi-permanent 'Puffer Pod' camps in Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area. The state government has given World Ex the green light to enter into the reserve approval process and proceed with lease and licence negotiations for the construction of five puffer pods on the Overland Track and one in the Walls of Jerusalem NP. The Puffer Pods have been designed by Neeson Murcutt Architects, who designed the company's award-winning, semi-permanent eco-campsites on the Larapinta Trail in the NT. worldexpeditions.com

THE GREAT NOOSA Trail Walk is on again this Queensland Queen's Birthday weekend, 5-7 October. Tickets are on sale for the three-day walk that provides just 150 walkers and volunteer guides with the chance to wander through the beautiful Noosa Hinterland. Participants will experience some of the very best of the region's nature, culture and communities. The series of Noosa Trails that have been chosen traverse Cooroy, Pomona, Cooran and Kin Kin through farmlands, natural forests and atop spectacular lookouts. greatnoosatrailwalk.com.au

NT IS BEING billed as 'The world's biggest art gallery' in the government's latest tourism advertising. A new marketing campaign launched around Australia recently, promotes the Territory's distinctive Aboriginal art and culture. "It is where you can discover Aboriginal carvings on the Tiwi Islands or learn the ancient practice of basket weaving in Katherine and Kakadu," said the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture, Lauren Moss. "It's a place where you can watch as generations of history are brought to life in colourful fabric prints in Arnhem Land one day and see traditional Aboriginal dot paintings inspired by the spectacular landscapes of the Red Centre the next day."

northernterritory.com



Above: The beauty of the Northern Territory. TOURISM NT



A sketch of what World Ex's 'pods' will look like.

IF YOU PLAN on exploring any of the national parks in NSW then make sure you get your hands on the free pocket guide now out from the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The guide features an easy-to-read camping guide and lots of other useful information including bushwalker safety, volunteering in national parks and events like Wild About Whales and Wilderquest. You can easily order the pocket guide online.

nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

WILD ESCAPES IS a new online booking service offering a great range of wilderness retreats to stay in and explore the surrounding areas – from the wilderness of Tasmania to the tropics of the Daintree. The website has hundreds of locations and one that took our fancy was Wollemi Retreat, hidden three hours from Sydney on 100 acres of bushland in the northwestern area of the Wollemi NP. There are plenty of lovely walks to do including the Glow-worm Tunnel Walk in the Wolgan Valley. The retreat features three double bedrooms, two bathrooms and lots of mods and cons.

wildescapes.com.au

IF YOU'RE PLANNING on walking the Portuguese Way - the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route starting in Portugal - from July you'll be able to fly from Australia direct to Porto, the start of the walk, with Emirates launching four services a week from Dubai. This removes the extra stop in Lisbon, or the commute between the two cities on public transport. Porto is a designated World Heritage Site situated along the coast and on the Douro River, world famous for its Port wine production and historical city centre. There's lots of great walks to be had both around the city and to Santiago in the classic Camino Style.

emirates.com/au/english

ADVENTURE KOKODA IS offering a new 10-Day Premium Trek Itinerary. The walk has been developed in response to trekkers who want to maximise the value of their Kokoda pilgrimage by exploring the historically significant Myola Lakes in more detail. The itinerary includes two nights at Bombers Campsite to allow walkers to spend a day exploring Myola Lakes and the American P40 Kittyhawk fighter aircraft that crashed there. Visitors will also get to trek to Abuari and Myaka Falls on the eastern side of the range which were defended by the 53rd and 2/16th battalions during the battle for Isurava. (Also read our Kokoda story pg 52 – Ed)

kokodatreks.com



Above: A war memorial on the Kokoda Track

GRAHAM TURNER, FOUNDER of Brisbane based company Flight Centre and his wife Jane (of the successful eco venture group Spicers Retreats) have been granted approval for the Spicers Rim Scenic Trail in Southeast Queensland's Scenic Rim. The proposal was approved by the state government and will welcome its first walkers later this year. The \$10 million of Scenic Rim Trail funds will extend existing walking tracks and include two new sustainable eco-camps, as well as improvements to public camping and hiking facilities.

spicersretreats.com



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Backpacking trips start with a recipe: this route, that camp, this many days, however many miles. While it might look good on paper, to taste its deliciousness you need a few key ingredients. Like the will to take the first step, a few friends to share the trail with and the right gear. So grab the most comfortable backpacking pack ever, start crafting your recipe and make it a good day.



The raw beauty of the Italian Dolomites cannot be overlooked.



GREAT SELF-
GUIDED WALKS

ITALIAN
DOLOMITES

MOUNTAIN MAGIC

Great Walks spends a week on a self-guided hike in the 'pale mountains' of the Italian Dolomites.

WORDS AND PHOTOS **BRENT MCKEAN**

Hidden Italy

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www.hiddenitaly.com.au



Left: Happy hikers on the Dolomites.

Below: Keep your eyes open for these sorts of markers.

Bottom: My standard lunch.



ON the fifth day of my self-guided walk in the Dolomites I found myself alone. The mighty Sassolungo massif stood above me like a silent sentinel as I watched a beautiful golden eagle soaring through the sky. Far down the valley I could see the town of Selva where I was based and ahead of me the trail skirted past a lovely lake. I was reminded of a quote from local identity, mountaineer and author Reinhold Messner who said, “Each mountain in the Dolomites is like a piece of art”.

If you’ve never been on a multi-day self-guided walk, it’s easier than you think. Walking tour operators like Hidden Italy have done the hard yards for you. They’ve researched the region, walked the trails, mapped them and produced clear walk notes. All you need is some common sense and a taste for adventure.

During my five-day self-guided walk in the Dolomites I was based in the Val Gardena region of South Tyrol, northern Italy. In the winter it’s a hive of activity as skiers catch chairlifts to the hundreds of trails zig-zagging the range. However, in the summer everything is at a much slower pace as hikers and trailbike riders discover the off peak attractions.

True north

After arriving in Rome and catching the train four hours north to the gorgeous town of Balzano I was met by a driver who took me

“SIGNPOSTS ARE CLEARLY MARKED AND PLACE NAMES, BY LAW, ARE WRITTEN IN THREE LANGUAGES.”

to Selva, about an hour away on a very scenic drive. Arriving at my lovely accommodation, ‘Hotel Sporting’ I was greeted by the owner, given a strong espresso and led to my room that offered wonderful views of the Val Gardena. Selva has everything you need: a supermarket, gear shops and plenty of restaurants and bars.

The following morning after a beautiful breakfast and choosing what I’d be eating for dinner (oh, the choices – handmade pasta, medallions of veal...!) I was met by my driver and taken 20 minutes back down the valley to Ortisei, a charming town that looks more Swiss than Italian. I then caught two cablecars up the northern side of the valley to the starting point of the walk (2500m) at Seceda (pron: Se-cheda).

Signposts are clearly marked and place names, by law, are written in three languages: Italian, German and the local Ladino dialect. But don’t worry, your guidebook explains all this. Heading to the Seceda lookout I was rewarded

NEW WALK

The Gargano Peninsula

Hidden Italy has a new 8-day self-guided walk in Gargano, a peninsula covered in UNESCO classified beech forests in the north of Puglia. The walk follows old pilgrim trails through farmlands and forests before popping out at a lovely fishing town for the last two nights (the last day includes a private boat trip along the rocky coast). Accommodation and meals are all first-class. hiddenitaly.com.au

Clockwise from main:

The Dolomites is famous for its pale coloured rocks.
Hotel Sporting had friendly staff and lots of facilities.
The mighty Sassolungo massif.



with 360° views of the Dolomites and the Alps in Austria. A large wooden crucifix stood above the lookout and as a mist rolled in the scene was simply breathtaking.

Over the next few hours I slowly made my way down the valley towards Selva, passing shepherds huts, stunning limestone tors, pine forests and fields of flowers, all the time surrounded by this massive, inspiring mountain range. Near the end I stopped at a 'refugi' (a mountain hut with accommodation and restaurant) and tried a local delicacy, dumplings floating in a lovely salty broth, washed down with a German witbier. The meal and views were excellent – and it was hard to imagine all of this was once the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting in WWI.

The White War

Italy entered WWI in 1915 on the side of the Allies with the chief aim of settling old scores with Austria and annexing disputed land north of its border. Although Italy had hoped to gain the territories with a surprise offensive, the front was soon bogged down in trench warfare; similar to the Western Front, but at high altitudes and with very cold winters.

Both sides operated in terrible conditions and were well aware of the other's plights,

“NEAR THE END I STOPPED AT A ‘REFUGI’ AND TRIED A LOCAL DELICACY, DUMPLINGS FLOATING IN A LOVELY SALTY BROTH,”

and as historian Mark Thompson says in his excellent book *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front 1915-1919*, “Better than anyone in the world, the enemy who wants to kill you knows your anguish.”

As the war dragged and the death toll climbed, both sides could see the futility of the fighting and Thompson describes instances of collusion between enemies. “On one occasion, the Austrian machine gunners were so effective that the second and third waves of Italian infantry could hardly clamber over the corpses of their comrades. The Austrians stopped firing and called out: ‘Stop, go back. We won’t shoot anymore. Do you want everyone to die?!’”

The Allied victory at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary ended the military operations. Over half a million soldiers and citizens died during



the campaign. All that’s left of the White War are some of the tunnels and trenches the soldiers lived and fought in.

Rivers and rocks

My second day was a more pedestrian affair as I walked from Selva down the Val Gardena back to Ortisei. The path took me through small villages, along gently flowing rivers and past many lovely buildings that wouldn’t look out of place in *The Sound of Music*. Reaching Ortisei I found a cafe for some lunch and wandered around the small



WALK NOTES | ITALIAN DOLOMITES

Time: 6 days | **Distance:** 45km | **Grade:** various



Day 1: Transport from Bolzano to Selva.

Day 2: Ortisei – Seceda – Selva. 7km/4hr/moderate.

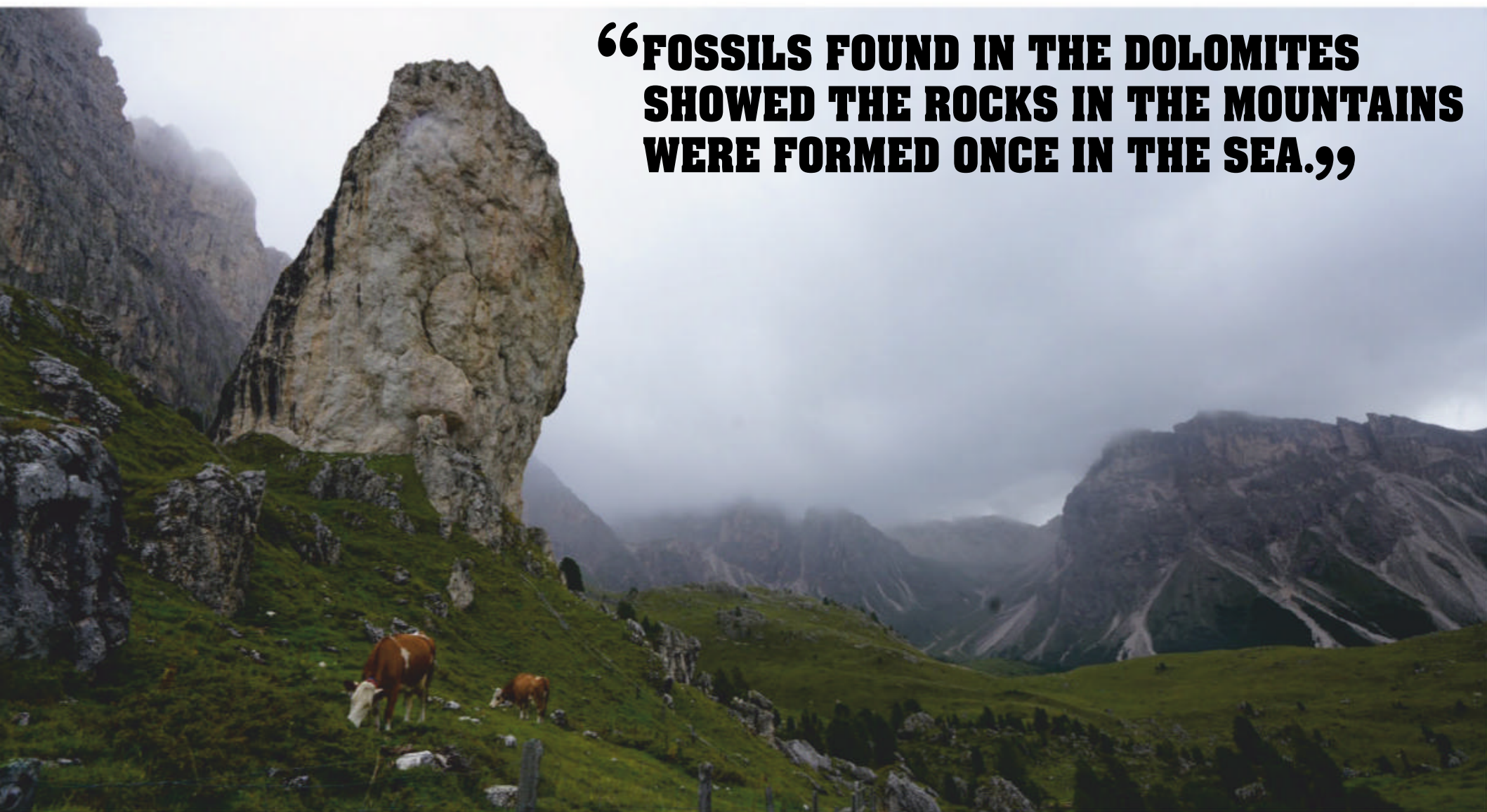
Day 3: Selva – Ortisei. 8km/1.5hr/easy

Day 4: Monte Suec – Selva. 15km/4hr/moderate

Day 5: Sassolungo circuit. 10km/6.5hr/moderate-challenging

Day 6: Transport from Selva to Bolzano

“FOSSILS FOUND IN THE DOLOMITES SHOWED THE ROCKS IN THE MOUNTAINS WERE FORMED ONCE IN THE SEA.”



Above: Walk three passes through Saltria, a small locality of hotels and huts.

Top: Pieralongia (the Long Stone) at Seceda.

but charming town centre. One highlight was the local museum that offered insight into the region’s geology.

In July 1791 a French naturalist with a very long name published an article describing a peculiar limestone he had discovered in the Italian Alps. The white rock was similar to common limestone, but the mineral grains forming the rock showed almost no reaction with acids, unlike crystals of calcite or aragonite (the main minerals of limestone), which react violently. Three years later the naturalist Richard Kirman introduced the dolomite as a new mineral; the name from there became used to name the dolostone rocks and finally gave the Dolomites – referred in the past simply as the “Pale Mountains” – their actual name.

Fossils found in the Dolomites showed the rocks in the mountains were formed once in the sea by living organisms in a process known as ‘bioconstruction’. Around the same time our mate James Cook discovered – not entirely voluntarily (the *HMS Endeavour* collided with it) – one of the largest living bioconstructions on Earth – the Great Barrier Reef.

Back in Selva, dinner was another tasty affair washed down with one of the best pinot noirs I have ever tried.

Mountains and myths

Walk three began again at Ortisei, this time with a cablecar up the southern side of the

valley to Monte Suvretta. I hopped off at 2000m, read my walknotes and headed along a well-maintained path and through the largest high altitude alpine meadow in Europe. The day was pure joy. I had plenty of time to meander along, take side trips and stop whenever I wanted to (one of the advantages of a self-guided walk). The sun was shining, there weren’t too many people around – and views were to die for.

I asked Simon Tancred, owner of Hidden Italy, what attracted him to the Dolomites in the first place.

“The scenery is spectacular and unique – nothing like it anywhere else in the world – and so well and respectfully looked after,” Simon told me.

“There is so much variety of walking in one area: from one base, you can access a relaxed stroll through rolling pastures, a challenging hike up limestone cliffs and everything in between, all with wonderful vistas. Also I love the history of the region, from the Stone Age with Ötzi (Europe’s oldest known natural human mummy) crossing the passes and the amber trading routes to the Medieval history to the World Wars and finally the resolution of their communal divides in the 1990s. I also love the old folk tales and myths that animate the land and trails.”

Simon’s right about the local myths. One popular story tells how the Dolomites acquired their pale colour after a visiting princess from the moon required that they be whitewashed to ease her homesickness.



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Right: Where to go next?!

Below: Plenty of hikers chose to use walking poles.



Halfway through the walk I found a lovely meadow to stop for lunch, which I had arranged back at my hotel that morning. After that it was another easy-going two hour stroll back down the valley until I hit Selva and found a little German-style pub to pop into. A perfect way to end a perfect day.


The big finale

My final walk started with another cablecar just near my hotel and then for the next six or so hours I'd be walking around the base of the mighty Sassolungo massif (The Long Stone), featuring the highest peaks in South Tyrol.

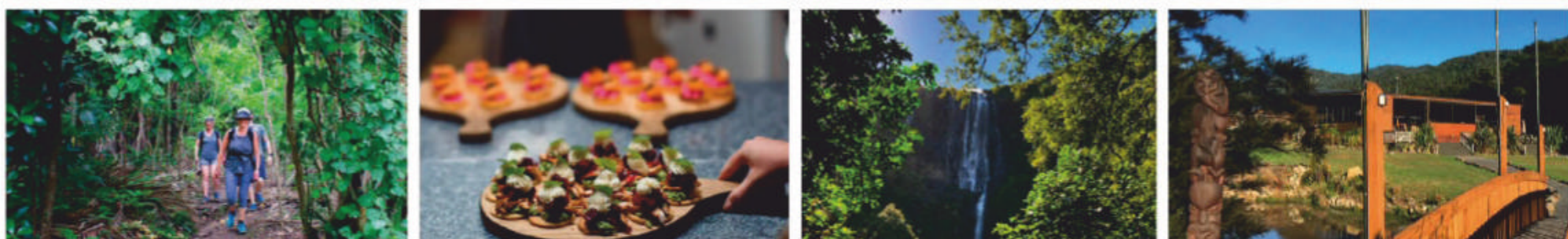
The path started out quite steep and winding before disappearing into a forest of pine and low-lying scrub. I had to pay a bit more attention to my walk notes as multiple trails crossed each other, but it was all signposted. Also early on there were some steep exposed sections on loose gravel paths. Of all the days to need walking poles this would be it.

As I rounded the base of Sassolungo I was met with larger groups of people who were able to drive up this side of the valley to access the lovely refugis and do short walks. Halfway through the day I also stopped at a refugi and had another dumpling and witbier lunch before tackling the final part of the walk.

The undulating dirt path continued to skirt Sassolungo and as the light changed so did the views and it was a battle between lapping up the scenery with my eyes and recording it with my camera. One thing I noticed was the amount of people with dogs, something you'd never get in a national park in Australia. It was really lovely to see.

I rounded another corner and it was here that I found myself alone, staring at a golden eagle playfully catching thermals, the Dolomite Range and the Val Gardena spread across the horizon like the opening scene of an Italian film shot in 70mm CinemaScope. It's rumoured JRR Tolkien used the Dolomites as the blueprint for Middle Earth. And looking out from where I stood with Sassolungo all Mordor-like I'm inclined to believe it. 

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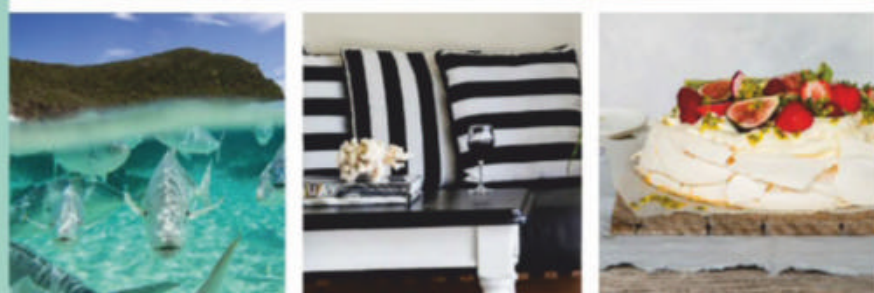


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WORDS BY **CARO RYAN** –
LOTSAFRESHAIR.COM

Right: Get back to nature
on the Bibbulmun Track
with Life's An Adventure.
TOURISM WA







ASK any bushwalker worth their salty sweat crust to name the top bucket list walks in Australia and they'll easily rattle off at least ten 'before I die' adventures. But if you're looking for something different, here's a list of walks that while probably not front-of-mind, offer a unique take on what it means to hike in Australia.

TASMANIA

Overland Track in winter

Over 9,000 people visited Tasmania's iconic Overland Track in 2018, with the majority making the north-south journey during the

booking season of October to May. There's good reason that this is the best known multi-day walk in Australia and a visit during winter promises to transform the ancient landscape and create a completely different experience on snow shoes. Go independently or with Tasmanian Expeditions (tasmanianexpeditions.com.au) and enjoy the quiet of an uncrowded hut or tent platform, without the need to book (or pay fees), or snuggle in to one of Tasmanian Walking Company's cosy huts and enjoy a warm shower and full catering.

Time/distance/grade: 7 days/65km/moderate-challenging

Independent: parks.tas.gov.au

Guided: taswalkingco.com.au

Wukalina Walk

The living museum of the Palawa Aboriginal people awaits the thoughtful traveller in the Mount William NP, in northeast Tasmania. Opened in 2018, this Aboriginal-owned and operated four-day experience immerses small groups of ten in the history, story, food, medicine and spirit of the spectacular Bay of Fires area. With a distinct culture that evolved in isolation, the Aboriginal guides seek to connect walkers with a deeper understanding of Country, whilst enjoying the comfortable accommodation of the bespoke domed huts, meticulously renovated lighthouse keeper's cottage and delicious local foods accompanied by Tasmanian wines.

Time/distance/grade: 4 days/33km/moderate

Guided: wukalinawalk.com.au

Wineglass Bay Sail Walk

For lovers of sea and land, the romance of these slow travel styles unite aboard the 23 metre luxury ketch Lady Eugenie that forms the unique accommodation and transport for this six day exploration of the stunning east coast of Tasmania. Accompanied with delicious gourmet meals and a maximum of eight guests, this is small group travel at its best. Breathe the salt air at Fortescue Bay and its iconic dolerite sea stacks of the Candlestick and the Totem Pole, along with Forestier Peninsula, Maria and Schouten Islands and Freycinet Peninsula. Ascend 200 metres for the classic Wineglass Bay views or relax onboard, swim, snorkel or walk between 3 – 7hrs each day. Your choice.

Time/distance/grade: 4-6 days/3-7hrs walking each day/moderate

Guided: taswalkingco.com.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Pilgrim Trail

For lovers of the Camino, this 180km trail will have you walking in the footsteps of Spanish Benedictine monk and mystic, Rosendo Salvado (1814-1900). A 'friend of the Yued people', with deep respect for their traditional culture, he walked from Perth to New Norcia (named after the birthplace of St Benedict) in 1846 to establish a mission. Leaving the urban streets of Subiaco and heading through the Swan Valley, you will spy the traditional yellow shell icons of a Camino, which take you onwards through Walyunga and Avon national parks, forest reserves and farmland rich in flora.

Time/distance/grade: 8 days/180km/moderate-challenging

Independent: pilgrimtrail.com.au

“THE LIVING MUSEUM OF THE PALAWA ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AWAITS THE THOUGHTFUL TRAVELLER.”

Cape to Cape and Bibbulmun guided walk

Combine the best of WA's most popular walks in a luxurious eight day experience. Sleep in comfort and indulge in some of Margaret River's finest food and wine, whilst carrying only day packs to lighten the load. A cooking masterclass, majestic coastal cliffs, giant Karri forests and waters reminiscent of a tropical paradise are just the beginning. A perfect trip for time poor luxe lovers, all transfers (including helicopter) on day four will allow you to connect to these two iconic walks within one compact itinerary.

Time/distance/grade: 8 days/96km/moderate

Guided: lifesanadventure.com.au

Independent: bibbulmuntrack.org.au



Above: Stunning views on the Wukalina Walk.

CHRIS CRERAR

Opposite: Great coastal walking on the Cape to Cape with Walk into Luxury.

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AUSTRALIAN DESERT
EXPEDITIONS



Top: The solitude of Mowarry Beach on the Light to Light walk.

Above: Green Gully Creek, Green Gully Track.
HANE RUMING/OEH

Murchison Gorge Trek

For complete isolation, surrounded by towering sandstone cliffs in rugged, spectacular country, Kalbarri NP's Class 6 Murchison Gorge Trek offers more challenges than most. Although the river is home to fish and frogs, its high salt content means that walkers must cache and carry all their drinking water and think about emergency plans in this area which has no helicopter access. Rewards are high for fit walkers, confident with rock-hopping and river crossings, with long swimming holes to escape the heat, even during the May to September season.

Time/distance/grade: 5 days/ 38km/ challenging
Independent: parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au

Best of Cape to Cape

When people think of WA's Margaret River region, it's only natural to dream of gourmet food and fine wines. This indulgent trip promises to delight walkers with 57km of the very best sections of the iconic coastal odyssey from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin, whilst pampering tired bodies with luxurious accommodation, along with gourmet food and wine tastings. Carrying only day packs, your luggage (and your car) will be relocated for you, so you can simply focus on the stunning coastal scenery, wild and lonely beaches and shaded forest glades.

Time/distance/grade: 6 days/57km/moderate
Self Guided: walkintoluxury.com.au
Independent: parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au

NEW SOUTH WALES

Green Gully Track

The only hut-based multi-day walk in NSW, the five-day Green Gully Track is unique for

its location within the declared wilderness of the World Heritage Oxley Wild Rivers NP, providing access into the steep gorge area, west of Port Macquarie. Linking together former cattlemen's huts and homesteads by management trails, creek walking and small off-track sections, NSW National Parks has created an experience for those who don't want to carry a tent or cooking gear, making it a great first multi-day hike for anyone with good fitness and bushwalking experience.

Time/distance/grade: 5 days/65km/Moderate to Difficult

Independent: nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Thredbo Valley Track

Winding gently beside the babbling Thredbo River this easy to moderate shared use track leads walkers and cyclists gradually downhill, across multiple suspension bridges and through a variety of ecosystems, from Thredbo to Lake Crackenback. Possible as a day walk, slow your pace and enjoy a night at the Ngarigo Campground taking in the wildflowers, snuggled within the valley's alpine embrace. As work continues on new extensions to the track, the future will see it stretch 60km from Dead Horse Gap to Jindabyne and create a world class multi-day walk experience. [NB: Keep an eye out for news of the Kosciuszko Snowies Iconic walk, a 44 km link between the ski resorts of Thredbo, Charlotte Pass, Guthega, Perisher and Lake Crackenback. It will provide options for multi-day walks staying in luxury accommodation or campsites.]

Time/distance/grade: 2 days/16 km (extending to 36 km and 60 km)/easy-moderate

Independent: nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Guided: mikeedmondson.com.au

OUTSIDE IS BETTER



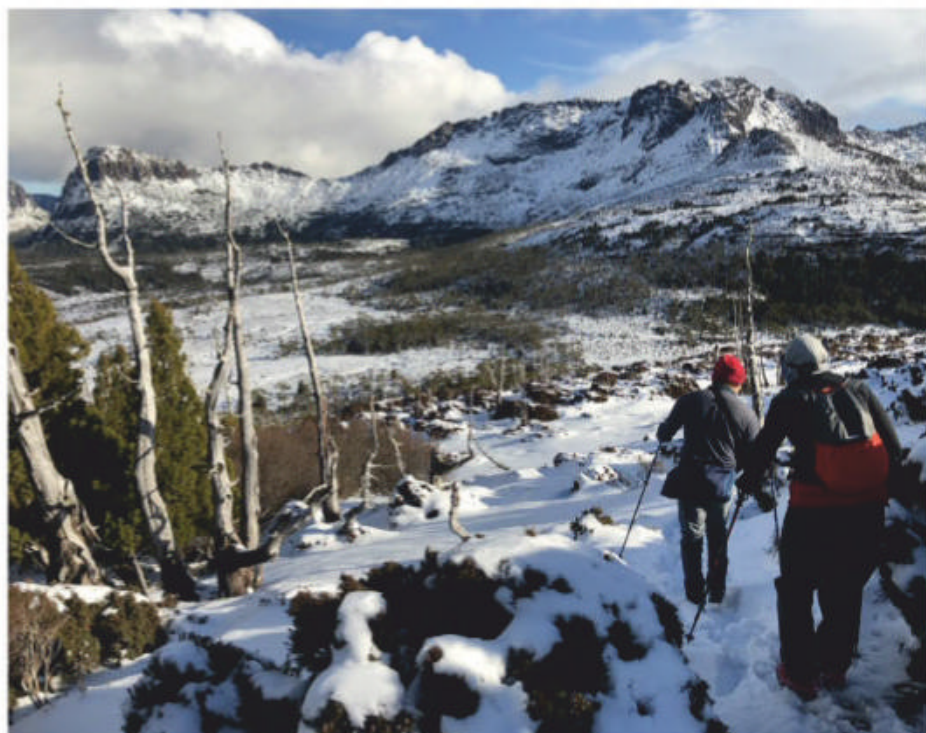
Stressed? Leave it behind. It won't survive where you're going. Outside, it's just you. Your bursting lungs, burning legs, sweaty brow, giant smile. Outside, there's nothing else, and that's the best bit. You knew it all along, but maybe it's time for a reminder - outside is better.



Above: Explore the Victorian Alps with Park Trek and pack horses.

Opposite: Descending Mt Pelion East on a winter Overland Track walk. TAS WALKING CO.

“CONNECT TO THE STORIES OF PIONEERING FAMILIES AND THEIR HISTORY.”



Light to Light Walk

Coastal walking and all it promises with whales, seabirds and breathtaking beaches, doesn't get more classic than this. A great 'first overnighter', with lovely well established campgrounds, this journey along southern NSW's Ben Boyd NP, takes you from Boyds Tower to Green Cape Lighthouse near Eden. Treat yourself to a stay in a lighthouse keeper's cottage, find space in your backpack for a snorkel and cossie and watch magic sunrises as they break over the horizon.

Time/distance/grade: 2-3 days/30km/moderate

Guided: light2light.com.au

Independent: nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

VICTORIA

Buller Huts Trail

It would be easy to think this is an 'official' National Parks promoted trail, however, dig a little deeper and you'll learn it's the dream-child of passionate bushwalker (and web designer), Darren Edwards. This challenging trek, draws the experienced and fit bushwalker over eleven of the Victorian High Country's iconic peaks and past many traditional mountain huts. Expansive views and diverse ecosystems (above and below the treeline), this circuit from Mt Buller resort promises to become a bucketlist for hard-core types.

Time/distance/grade: 7 days/90km/challenging

Independent: bullerhutstrail.com.au

Victorian Alps with Pack Horse

Carrying just a light day pack, stretch your legs whilst taking in four of the highest peaks in Victoria's High Country, including Mount Feathertop and Mount Bogong. Rest well in comfortable mountain camps, arriving to find everything taken care of: comfortable tents, wine and delicious food made with local ingredients, all carried on the backs of trusty mountain pack horses. Connect to the stories of pioneering families and their history by visiting rustic cattlemen's huts and snuggle down into a swag by a campfire, under the blanket of your million star accommodation.

Time/distance/grade: 5 or 9 days/45 or 106km/moderate-challenging

Guided (with pack horses): parktrek.com.au

Wilderness Coast Walk

Unlike its close neighbour, the Light to Light Walk, the Wilderness Coast Walk is suited to bushwalkers experienced in navigation and self sufficiency. As declared wilderness, bookings are essential for limiting the numbers and impacts along this pristine stretch of Croajingolong NP and Nadgee Nature Reserve. Coastal heath and sand dunes, make way for long stretches of beach walking, river crossings and breathtaking views. Recognised as a World Biosphere Reserve, the area holds

many natural secrets of habitat, species and landscape, framing wild, lonely beaches and a true sense of remoteness.

Time/distance/grade: 8-10 days/100km/moderate-hard

Independent: parkweb.vic.gov.au

QUEENSLAND

Conway Circuit Walk

Ride, run or walk your way from the Whitsundays hinterland of the Conway Ranges, through lush tropical rainforest, towering canopies and a diverse range of flora and fauna, to finish at Airlie Beach. Rise above the bustling tourist Mecca at Mount Hayward and Bloodwood Camp with views to the coast and offshore islands, including Whitehaven Beach. Previously known as the Whitsundays Great Walk, there are two basic bush campsites along the way, including pit toilets and tank water for those wanting to take their time or checkout the side trips, such as the Honeyeater lookout.

Time/distance/grade: 2-3 days/27km/moderate

Independent: parks.des.qld.gov.au

Mackay Highlands Great Walk

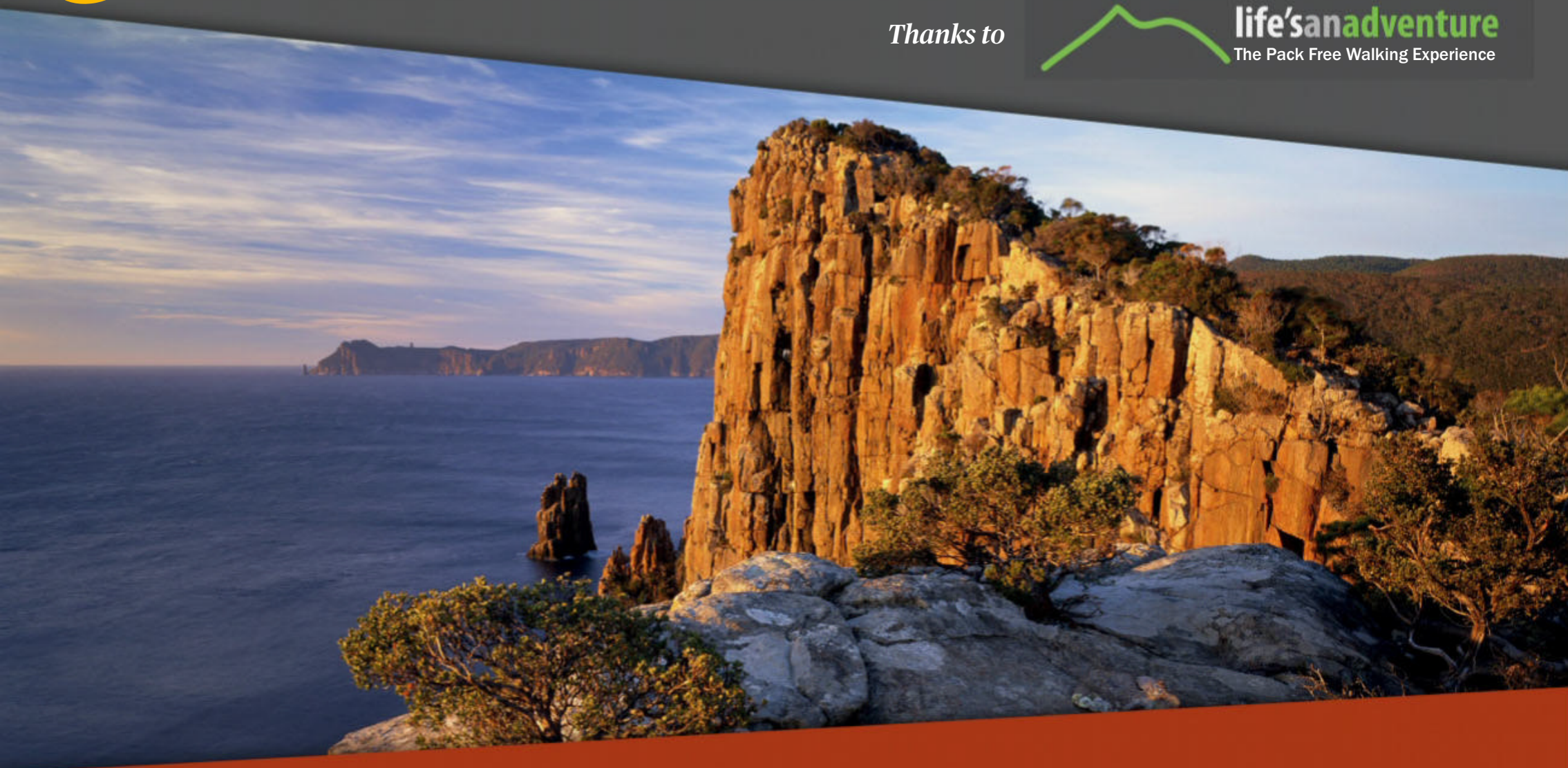
One hour west of Mackay, the Eungella NP hides one of Queensland's lesser known great walks. Shrouded by Australia's oldest subtropical rainforest, this well graded, easy to moderate walk is a perfect beginner's

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“YOU’RE LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER ECHIDNA, WALLABY, GOANNA AND ONE OF THE ISLAND’S 25,000 KOALAS.”

multi-day trip, where you can choose between being fully self sufficient at the four campsites with toilets and water, or stay at nearby Broken River Mountain Resort with accommodation, transfers and meals. Built in the forties by military servicemen along the top of the Great Dividing Range and designed to be walked north to south, this track promises views of the Pioneer Valley and is reportedly a great place to spot platypus.

Time/distance/grade: 3-5 days/56km/easy-moderate
Independent: parks.des.qld.gov.au

Munga Thirri Dune Camel Expedition

Blankets of stars bearing down upon your swag and a silence driven by isolation, this true expedition trek, with experienced cameleers

and ecological surveyors, will take you into the rarely visited dune field area of the Simpson Desert in southwest Queensland. This unique adventure calls for unique walkers looking for something completely different and coincides with the 175th anniversary of Charles Sturt’s 1844 expedition and is guaranteed to disconnect you from modern life in every way.

Time/distance/grade: 19 days/160km/challenging
Guided: desertexpeditions.org

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail

To truly appreciate the often underestimated size of Kangaroo Island,

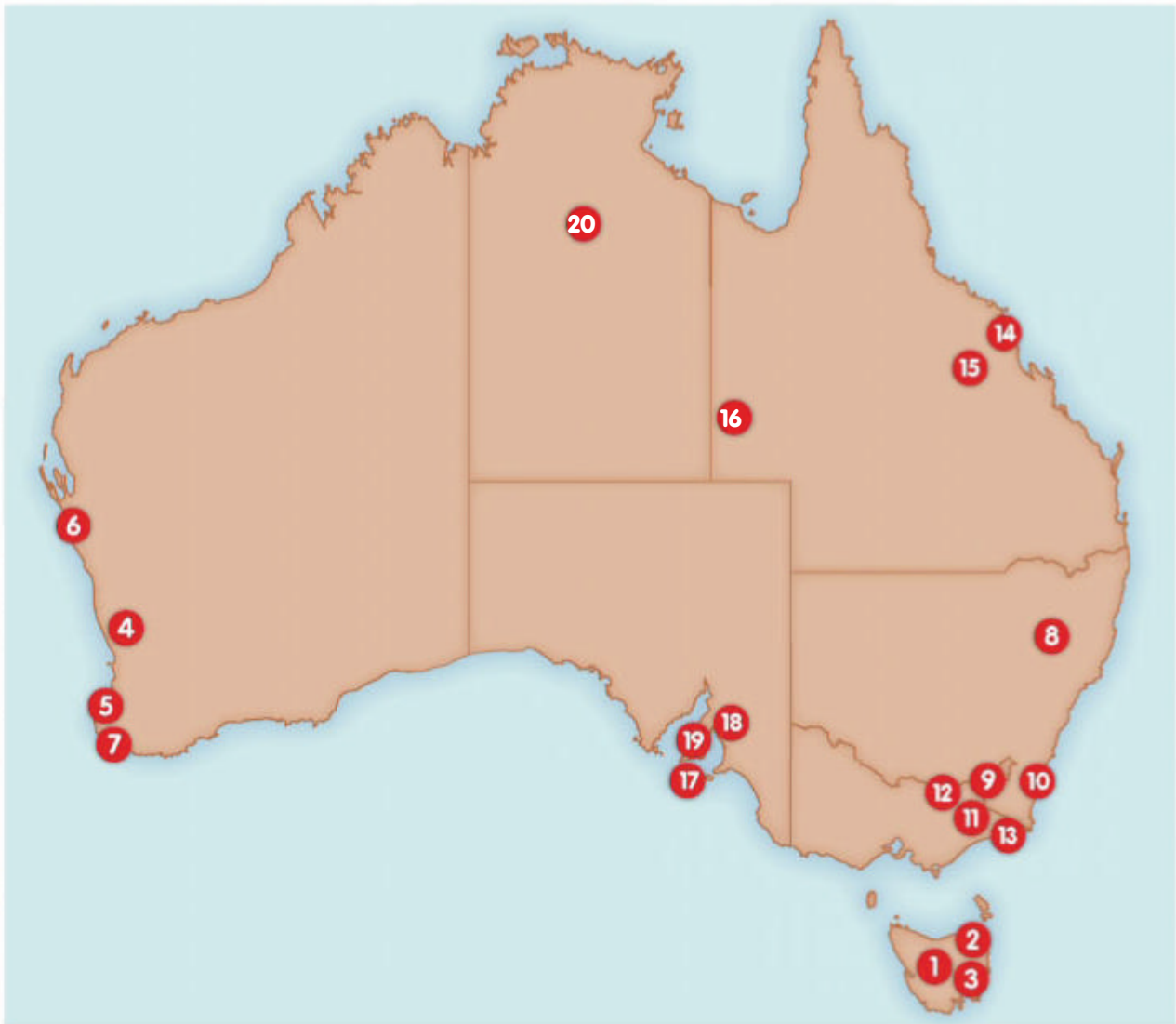
step out along the Wilderness Trail and let your feet hug the south west coastline of Australia’s third biggest island. Passing through eucalypt forest and along the dramatic shipwreck laden coast of Flinders Chase NP, you’re likely to encounter echidna, wallaby, goanna and one of the island’s 25,000 koalas. Take up the optional side trips to visit the iconic Remarkable Rocks and keep an eye out for bottle-nosed dolphins, whales and majestic sea birds as you gaze south to Antarctica. Campgrounds feature timber platforms and pit toilets or elect to stay off trail in one of the island’s many accommodation offerings.

Time/distance/grade: 5 days/61km/moderate
Independent: kangarooislandwildernesstrail.sa.gov.au



The tropical beauty of the Conway Circuit Walk. TQ

WALK NOTES | 20 BUCKET LIST DESTINATIONS



- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Overland Track in winter | 8. Green Gully Track | 15. Mackay Highlands Great Walk |
| 2. Wukalina Walk | 9. Thredbo Valley Track | 16. Munga Thirri Dune Camel Expedition |
| 3. Wineglass Bay Sail Walk | 10. Light to Light Walk | 17. Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail |
| 4. Pilgrim Trail | 11. Buller Huts Trail | 18. Lavender Federation Trail |
| 5. Cape to Cape and Bibbulmun guided walk | 12. Victorian Alps with Pack Horse | 19. Investigator Trail |
| 6. Murchison Gorge Trek | 13. Wilderness Coast Walk | 20. Jatbula Trail |
| 7. Best of Cape to Cape | 14. Conway Circuvit Walk | |

Lavender Federation Trail

Understood to be the longest Australian walking trail built entirely by volunteers (1997-2018), this 325km trail links legendary South Australian tracks, such as the Heysen, Kidman, Mawson and Riesling, from Murray Bridge south east of Adelaide, to the wine regions of the Barossa and Clare Valleys in the north. Tucked into the rain shadow of the Mount Lofty Ranges, the Lavender boasts dry weather walking much of the year. Passing through both private land and road reserves, this trail represents the best in community projects, where locals contribute to the cause and then see the economic benefits of offering accommodation, transfers and services as it passes through their towns.


Time/distance/grade: 14-16 days/325km/moderate
Independent: lavenderfederationtrail.org.au

Investigator Trail

Roaring oceans, expansive white sand beaches and dunes that put Lawrence of Arabia to shame, the Investigator Trail criss-crosses the Eyre Peninsula, just 15km from Port Lincoln. This well marked track, dotted with good campsites, links existing trails of Lincoln NP and is a haven for photographers, surfers, fisherfolk, whale watchers and walkers. Never rising more than 144 metres above sea level, this coast and heath walk lets you set the pace and possibly even stay in historic Donington Cottage for a mid-trip retreat!
Time/distance/grade: 4-6 days/89km/moderate
Independent: walkingsa.org.au

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Jatbula Trail

Get in line to book in-season June to Sept, as this stunning link between Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge and Leliyn (Edith) Falls has become quite the rock-star in recent years, with popular dates booking out quickly. If you're experienced and gain permission, it is possible to enjoy camping beside the stunning waterhole campsites during May to June, but it will involve some additional challenges. This icon of NT walking lulls you to sleep through the dreamy sound of wind through pandanus palms and whilst offering reflective moments at Aboriginal art sites of the Jaowyn people. 
Time/distance/grade: 5-6 days/62km/moderate
Independent: nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves

Walyunga NP offers excellent and informative walking trails close to Perth.



CITY SANCTUARY

Above: Walyunga NP covers almost 20km².

WORDS & PHOTOS **GEORGINA WALSH**

JUST 40km north-east of the city, Walyunga National Park is the place where the Avon River becomes the Swan. The park also contains one of the largest known Aboriginal campsites near Perth. Still in use in the late 1800s, archaeological evidence suggests that the area was used by Aborigines for over 6000 years.

With trails ranging from 1.6km to 10.6km, there's something to suit all levels of energy. For a quick local history lesson, the 1.6km Aboriginal Heritage Trail is a 6000-year journey through traditional stories and uses of the river landscape, its plants and animals.

However, those keen to work up a sweat may choose the 10.6km Echidna Trail which, at a leisurely three hours, is a great morning walk and a perfect prelude to a riverside lunch at the scenic picnic area at Walyunga Pool. All trails start and finish at Walyunga Pool Trail Head, which has gas barbecues, picnic tables on the river bank, and toilet facilities.


The Echidna Trail is marked in a clockwise direction away from the river and before long the first steep climb leads to a lookout from a granite outcrop. The sweeping view across the densely-vegetated river valley is a stark contrast to the next vista. This section is steep and slippery with loose rocks, so take care.

Walyunga National Park is where the Swan Coastal Plain meets the Darling Scarp and the trail soon offers a spectacular panorama of the coastal plain, taking in bright green grazing country and horse studs, all the way to distant white coastal dunes.

Heading across the scarp, a junction offers a shorter route back to the trail head along the Kingfisher Trail, while the Echidna Trail climbs Woodsome Hill which, at 260m above sea level, is the highest point in the park.

Wandering up and down the scarp, the trail offers superb views of different vegetation and land forms through the deep valley. Although steep and rocky in some places, the effort is worth it and an ideally-located wooden rest seat offers a stunning valley vista. Concentration is needed on sections of loose gravel as the trail continues down to the bottom of the valley. Here it joins Syd's Rapids Trail and follows the river back to Walyunga Pool.

This stretch of river is popular with kayakers and when the river is flowing fast, you're sure to see some of these thrill seekers in action. And although this final section is where you're most likely to come across other walkers, you won't be alone through any part of the walk. Kangaroos and birds are continuous company, and scratches, tracks and scats are a further indication of the abundance of wildlife in the area.

Walyunga contains one of the largest known Aboriginal campsites around Perth and was still in use by the Nyoongar people late last century. The area has been used as a meeting place for more than 6000 years. Walyunga is an Aboriginal name, but its meaning is uncertain. It could be a term that, roughly translated, means 'happy place'. Local Nyoongar people believe the Swan River was carved by the Waugal, and greet the Dreamtime serpent here by rubbing sand on their bodies and throwing it in the water. 

WALK NOTES ECHIDNA TRAIL, WALYUNGA NP, PERTH

Distance: 11km loop | **Time:** 4-5hr |
Grade: Moderate.



NEED TO KNOW

Walyunga Trail Head is at Walyunga Pool on Walyunga Road, 40km NE of Perth along Great Northern Highway. parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au

Happy Easter

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GREAT
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HEYSEN TRAIL,
SA

HEYSEN HIGHLIGHTS

Heysen Trail expert
Simon Cameron lists his
ten favourite spots on
the long distance walk.

.....
WORDS AND PHOTOS **SIMON CAMERON**

Left: Rainbow over the
Barossa Valley. R Alcock.



LONG distance trails attract walkers with the promise of challenge and discovery. The Heysen Trail, Australia's longest dedicated walking trail, delivers on many levels through its diversity. It runs from the Southern Ocean to the arid north, following the Mount Lofty and Flinders Ranges for nearly 1200km. It skirts spectacular coastal cliffs, winds along glacial valleys, through forests, rolling vineyards, cereal heartlands, ancient flood plains, and quartzite gorges to the iconic outback landscape of the Flinders Ranges.

The Heysen Trail was built from 1978 to 1992 along the most scenic route from Cape Jervis on the southern tip of the Fleurieu Peninsula to Parachilna Gorge in the northern Flinders Ranges. There was good reason to name the trail after Australia's most successful

20th Century landscape painter, Sir Hans Heysen. He was the first to popularise the arid landscapes of the Flinders Ranges in the 1920s and also painted dramatic seascapes along the southern coast, and rural scenes from the lush Adelaide Hills. Highlights of any walk will depend on the interests of the walker and this top ten are my personal selection tracking south to north.

Deep Creek

Access: Tapanappa Campground,
1 hour drive from Adelaide.

The coastal cliffs of Deep Creek Conservation Park, southern Fleurieu Peninsula, are a 'turquoise coast' of cliffs and secluded inlets cut by creeks, with views across Backstairs Passage

to Kangaroo Island. The Conservation Park is the largest nature reserve on the Peninsula with over one hundred species of birds, and you share the path with kangaroos and echidnas. Schools of dolphins cruise the shore and southern right whales migrate in season. Deep Creek flows all year cutting the steep limestone hills, cascading over a waterfall before finding its way to the white sandy beach.

Inman Valley

Access: Inman Valley township,
50 min drive from Adelaide.

Inman Valley was carved by a giant glacier 270 million years ago in the Permian epoch, when Australia was only 150km from the South Pole. The river of ice arose from the Tasmanian

“THERE WAS GOOD REASON TO NAME THE TRAIL AFTER AUSTRALIA’S MOST SUCCESSFUL LANDSCAPE PAINTER, SIR HANS HEYSEN.”

highlands and ground its way north west. In 1859 the first evidence of glaciation in Australia was reported in Inman Valley by Government geologist Alfred Selwyn. Rounded granite boulders, known as erratics, dot the Heysen. The largest is named after Selwyn. The broad valleys offer rich farmland and rolling vistas from the ridge tops.

Barossa Valley vineyards

Access: 1 hour drive from Adelaide

This is not a true valley, but rather a broad plain on both sides of the North Para River. There is no better way to see its full extent than to walk into it from the heights of the Kaiserstuhl Conservation Park. The highest peak was named in honour of the

Left: Coastal cliffs.

Below: Heading towards Wilpena Pound.



“THIS IS THE MOST REMOTE PART OF THE HEYSEN TRAIL... WITH ROLLING SILVER-GRAY SALT BUSH HILLS AND HIDDEN GORGES.”



Prussian emperor by the eccentric German mineralogist, Johann Menge, who was probably the first colonist to walk the entire length of the Mount Lofty Ranges in the 1840s. During WWI the ‘Enemy Names Board’ changed it to Mount Kitchener but the strong German heritage of the Barossa Valley reasserted itself in 1975. Menge was the first to record the viticultural potential of the area and he encouraged the first wave of Lutheran emigres to take up holdings.

Copper Towns

Access: 1 hour drive from Adelaide

In 1841, Kapunda became the first copper town in South Australia. Four years later an even richer deposit was found at Burra, which eventually became known as the ‘Monster Mine’. By 1847 Burra was the largest industrial town in Australia with a population twice that of Perth and Brisbane combined. The copper bonanza lasted until 1873 and a substantial stone town remains on the edge of the arid plain. Beyond is the ‘outside country’ where limited rainfall defeated repeated attempts at agricultural expansion. This is the most remote part of the HeySEN Trail passing into rugged Caroon Creek Conservation Park with rolling silver-gray salt bush hills and hidden gorges.



Crystal Brook

Access: 2 hours drive from Adelaide

The town of Crystal Brook was named by explorer Edward John Eyre in 1839 when the colony’s north was terra incognita and hopes of an inland sea were high. This beautiful heritage town has particular significance for the HeySEN walker. This is the start of the Flinders Ranges, and the place where Warren Bonython, the post WWII bushwalking pioneer, started his mammoth traverse of the entire range immortalised





**Opposite page,
from top:**
Bunyerroo Creek bed.

Golden Spike,
Enorama Creek.
R ALCOCK.

Bunyerroo lookout.

Left: Redruth
Gaol, Burra.
R ALCOCK.

in his book *Walking the Flinders Ranges*. His journey inspired the concept of a long-distance trail and Bonython chaired the working committee for a decade.

Quorn

Access: 4 hours drive from Adelaide

Quorn is a heritage town, once the railway hub of Australia. The east-west Australian connection and the Great Northern Railway, later known as the Ghan stopped here because of Australia's poorly coordinated rail gauges. Passengers stayed overnight to change trains. In WWII, up to 60 troop trains a week stopped and the Quorn Country Women's volunteers became nationally famous for serving nearly 200,000 meals a year. The Transcontinental and Ghan railways were rerouted in 1956 and a Rip van Winkle veil fell over the town, preserving shop fronts and its five hotels – the town has been used as the base or setting for 24 movies.

NEED TO KNOW

The Friends of the Heysen Trail is a not-for-profit organisation that maintains the Heysen Trail in partnership with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW). A regular walking program occurs year-wide, with different grades of walks catering for beginners to experienced walkers. heysentrail.asn.au



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WALK NOTES | HEYSEN TRAIL, SA

Distance: 1200km

Time: As long as you want!

Grade: Moderate-challenging



From above left:

Pichi Richi Railway,
Quorn. R Alcock

Mt Arden.

Mount Arden

Access: From Eyre Depot,
3 hours drive from Adelaide

Mount Arden is one of only three peaks named by Captain Matthew Flinders on his 1802 expedition, triangulated from the top of Spencer Gulf, forty kilometres to the southwest. Its 844m peak offers unparalleled 360° views. The Elder Range and Wilpena Pound beckon to the north and the HeySEN Trail walker can retrace their steps on the distant horizon, picking out the distinct peaks of Mount Remarkable, Dutchmans Stern, and Mount Brown.

Wilpena Pound

Access: 6 hours by car from Adelaide

The Trail traverses the Pound from Bridal Gap, reputed to be the only southern saddle that you could lead your horse over, to Wilpena Gap. This is sacred country to the Adnyamathana with the curving walls of the Pound formed by a sleeping Dreamtime Serpent. Bunyeroo Lookout, just north of the Pound provides the best view of Wilpena's northern bastions including its highest point, Saint Mary Peak.

Bunyeroo Creek

Access: 20 minutes drive from Wilpena

The eroded walls of Bunyeroo Creek show the striated layers of 800-million-year-old seas. The trail follows the creek, passing over terraces of rock which expose the fossilised ripples of shallow shores. The colours of the ripples range from russet red to dark green depending on the fluctuating depth of sea when they were

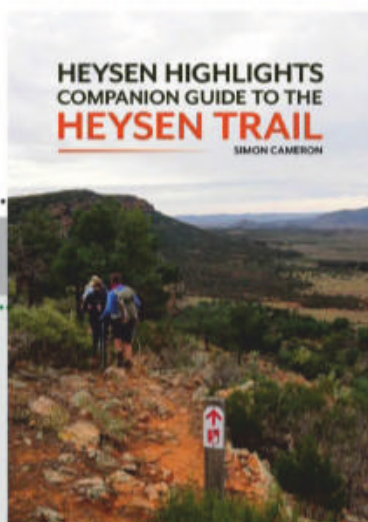


deposited. The exposed strata includes a distinct 10cm layer from the sixth largest meteorite impact on earth, 580 million years ago. Estimated 10km in diameter, the meteorite struck 300km to the west, forming Lake Acraman and depositing ejecta over a 500km radius. Known as the Acraman Layer it is clearly visible along the eroded creek banks of this section.

Trezona / Enorama

Access: 40 minutes drive from Wilpena

Here the trail crosses the first evolutionary step of animal life, taken 650 million years ago. The first jellyfish-like animals are named after nearby Ediacara Station and were identified by geologist Reg Sprigg in 1946. Subsequent discoveries in Newfoundland, Africa and the United Kingdom established the Ediacaran epoch as the start of animal life. The Ediacaran strata is exposed over a broad area from Trezona to Brachina Gorge and the distinct colour of the rocky layer is visible at Enorama Creek, just past the Trezona Campground. In 2004, the Ediacaran epoch was added to the world's datum, and the reference point known as the 'golden spike' (actually made of bronze) was placed here. 



FURTHER READING

Simon Cameron's book *Heysen Highlights, Companion Guide to the Heysen Trail* (\$39.95) is available from selected stockists or at heysentrail.asn.au

The trail dawns.

Trace the contours of the map
Feel the ridgeline in your fingers

Brace yourself

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Red cliffs from the volcanic past

COASTAL CRUISING

The beach and clifftop walk from Ballina to Lennox Head offers amazing ocean views.

WORDS AND PHOTOS_ JOHN AUSTIN

SOUTH of well-trodden Byron Bay in northern NSW is a little known trail along some of the region's most dramatic coastline. The 4hr walk from Ballina to Lennox Head is suitable for people of all ages, although climbing headlands requires some fitness. For those with a fear of heights stay back from the cliffs as they are not fenced but definitely the highlight of this walk.

There are many access points but I chose to start with a coffee at the Ballina Ramada Hotel near the centre of town then along the broad Richmond River and peaceful sandy river beaches where you can easily spot flocks of pelicans, cormorants, and hopeful anglers. It's a shared path over the Hill Street bridge to Shaws Bay and the historic Fenwick House built in 1886, then out on the breakwater and the pounding mouth of the Richmond River where dolphins ride the incoming waves. At the Lighthouse Beach Surf Club look for

the 1866 lighthouse on the left, and there's a lookout offering sweeping views over Shelly Beach and south to Evans Head.

The path follows the road to Angels Beach, or you can walk the beach around the Black Head rocks, which are more red than black and the home of whistling Brahminy Kites. From the path look for the bush track to the top of Black Head and great views out to sea, and the chance to spot whales and schools of dolphins fishing and playing in the rolling waves.

Angels Beach is a longer beach and offers the serenity of sand walking or through groves of large paper bark trees and littoral rainforest, but watch for cyclists. The local bushcare group planted thousands of native trees and shrubs and appears to be winning the fight against the noxious Bitou Bush, planted last century to stabilise and re-vegetate the sand hills from sand mining. Both ways lead to Flat Rock, a stopover for migratory wading birds. There are great views to the north.

At Sharpes Beach you leave the shared path behind and head uphill to Whites Head. Take

WALK NOTES

BALLINA TO LENNOX HEAD, NSW

Time: 4.5hr | Distance: 21km |

Grade: easy-moderate



care walking the volcanic red cliff tops but thrill at the drop into the churning surf below and sea eagles patrolling above. Highlights include Skennars Head, Boulder Beach and Iron Peg with spectacular views across the water to the steep green pastures and red cliffs of Lennox Head. Then along an isolated beach track, which is cut off after heavy rain by the swollen inland lagoon.

Up the steep grassed rise are more sheer cliffs and small patches of rainforest. This is the most isolated part of the walk and offers serenity, big blue skies, and the best whale viewing. The track climbs the southern side of Lennox Head and down the timber steps to the famous grassed viewing area where hang gliders and surfers try their skills. Lennox town and Seven Mile Beach unfolds before you, and it's great to spend a few minutes lying on the grass or contemplating the view.

Back to the formal shared path which leads all the way to the town of Lennox Head with its cafes, restaurants, boutiques and fish and chip shops. There's also a very convenient bus stop, so it's possible to make the return trip back to Ballina by bus and see the coast from the road that takes a turn inland through the hills that back onto the country you have just walked through. Or keep walking north from Lennox and see if you can make beautiful Broken Bay and beyond. 🌀

NEED TO KNOW

The Ballina to Lennox Head cliff and beach walk is 20min drive south of Byron Bay in northern NSW. For more info and downloadable map visit beachwalkaustralia.com.au/ballinatolennoxhead

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FEATURE
OUTBACK
ADVENTURE

TWO ADVENTURERS AND A BABY

Leaving the safety of the city, Lauren and Justin Jones – and baby Morgan – go on an 1800km Outback odyssey.

WORDS **LAUREN JONES**. PHOTOS **LAUREN & JUSTIN JONES**.

Setting up campsite at sunset,
on a gibber plain.





I had just turned 36 and I was a new mother. Morgan was six months old when my husband Justin and I decided to go on a walk, a big walk, an 1,800km walk through the Australian Outback, with our one-year-old in tow.

I did not make this decision because my new 'mum life' fitted seamlessly with what motherhood looked like on Instagram: filled with endless new baby bliss. In fact, it was the opposite. While I loved this little person more than my heart could hold, amidst the sleep deprivation, baby routines and constant responsibility, Justin and I found ourselves missing our independence and mourning our freedom to just head out the door and do what we like. I yearned for wildness, for adventure and not just in the gated confines of an urban kids' playground. And so we decided to go on a pilgrimage, a parenthood pilgrimage, walking through the centre of Australia.

Adventure awaits

The Outback is the stuff of legend: vast, unpredictable, wild and free. It calls to the adventurous. All the things we once were and all the things we hoped to be again, but this time as a family of three.

Unlike myself who before our expedition was more businesswoman than adventurer, more glamer than camper, my husband Justin was no stranger to adventure. He was the first person to kayak unsupported from Australia to NZ and traverse Antarctica from the coast to the pole and back when he was single and aged in his 20s – both were world firsts.

As a new dad, he questioned whether big expeditions had to end where family life began. Although he wanted to have more adventures, he now equally didn't want to miss out on the adventure unfolding at home – seeing his daughter grow. And so it began: a seemingly impossible goal of walking 1,800km, unaccompanied, on an expedition from the centre of Australia to the coast –



“JUSTIN AND I FOUND OURSELVES MISSING OUR INDEPENDENCE AND MOURNING OUR FREEDOM.”



WALK NOTES | LAUREN AND JUSTIN'S OUTBACK ODYSSEY

Time: 102 days | **Distance:** 1800km | **Grade:** Challenging



roughly the distance of walking from Brisbane to Melbourne.

We began our trek in the remote Indigenous community of Docker River/Kaltukatjara in the Northern Territory, before walking via Yulara, Kulgera and Aputula, then onto Oodnadatta, William Creek, Marree, Beltana, Parachilna and finally Port Augusta, in South Australia. Our walk took us past the soaring red rock domes of Kata Tjuta, the sandstone monolith Uluru, the great salt lakes Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens and the beautiful Flinders mountain ranges.

Over 102 days we battled extreme temperatures ranging from -2°C to 42°C , suffered sleep deprivation (thank you teething!), suffocating flies, dehydration, blisters, sore ankles, dodged snakes, dingoes, emus, wild brumbies and camels and created memories that both challenged and bonded our family together forever. Looking back our trip unfolded in four distinct phases: prepare, survive, adapt and new normal.

Clockwise from far left:

Morgan gets a rare bath in the Outback in our camp sink.

Justin, Morgan and myself on the trail.

All the gear needed for a 102 day expedition. Six food drops and water refill opportunities were organised in advance.

Below: Breakfast time in the bush.

I – Prepare

Each week involved figuring out what we would need to stay alive, what we could carry and how we could carry it. The weekends were for training – gone were the days of a leisurely stroll around the park. Now our family walks involved tyre dragging, weight training, trials in the Blue Mountains, and of course the baby had to come too.

Although the training was tough, I started to feel alive again, purposeful, happy and Morgan was too. Now crawling, the whole world seemed to be an adventure she couldn't wait to explore. Justin, a seasoned pro, was stunned by the complexity of adding a baby to the mix. By bringing Morgan we were doubling our workload. Imagine having to plan for 900 fully



compostable diapers, infant specific first aid kit, kid friendly gear and toys! Communication and time management was key. We learned that planning and preparation is 95 per cent of the expedition itself.

II – Survive

By the time we got to the start point, we were exhausted from the previous months of planning. Just leaving the house with a baby in tow and getting to the starting line felt like a massive achievement in itself and now we still had 1,800km to walk.

The first two weeks out on the trail were all about survival. Physically, emotionally and relationally we were pushing our limits to the

extreme. Our goal was to walk approximately 20km a day.

During this initial period, with a toddler in the back needing snacks, taking a break or a drink every 15 minutes and my heels covered in blisters, we were lucky to barely make half of that – every step felt hard.

Morgan, who just learnt to walk, no longer had the safety of her carpeted nursery but had to mitigate deadly snakes and thorns that could pierce the toughest boots or tyres. During the survival stage the challenge was just to put one foot in front of the other, otherwise an overwhelmed feeling could snuck in and we'd risk giving up. The expedition at this stage wasn't about walking 1,800km, it was just walking one kilometre more.

This phase ended not only with the proverbial wheel falling off, but the literal one. On day 9 Justin's axle snapped and the wheel fell off the cart. We didn't have a back up axle (not expecting it to break) so we had to quickly adapt and come up with plan B. We stashed the carts in a bush and waited five hours until a car came. From there we hitchhiked into the closest town of Yulara and organised some spare axles to be sent out from Sydney so we could keep going.

III – Adapt

The next phase, adaptation, lasted about a month. This phase wasn't quite as painful but it wasn't quite as fun as I hoped it would be



“WE STARTED TO ENCOUNTER PLAGUE-LIKE SWARMS OF FLIES, SEARING DESERT TEMPERATURES, DRIER, ROCKIER AND HARSHER CLIMATE, 100KM WINDS...”



Lauren and Morgan taking a well deserved break.

TOP GEAR

Here are three stand-out pieces of kit that made our great walk even better:

Tent

The North Face has been a long time supporter of Justin's previous expeditions and we were so stoked to have them jump on board for this expedition as well. Because their gear is so versatile, durable and long lasting, we could actually use some of the same gear from previous expeditions, like his tent, a VE25 which kept Justin alive for 89 days in Antarctica and now kept our family comfortable and safe for 102 days in the Outback. thenorthface.com.au

Dry bags/stuff sacks

We packed all of our dry foods into Sea To Summit dry bags, like our pre-made bulk muesli mix, pancake mix, beans, rice, pasta etc. They stored the food in perfect condition for long periods of time. We also used dry bags and stuff sacks for our gear – helping us to quickly organise and pack in and out each day. seatosummitdistribution.com.au

100 per cent compostable disposable nappies

We trialled the first gCycle Diapers, the world's first fully compostable, disposable nappy. Because they have no plastic, they are clean to burn. Out on the trail they produced zero waste and didn't need to be washed out. Although these are still in the prototype stage you can use other products from the gDiaper range out on the trail. And don't forget your own bamboo or DIY zero waste wipes. gcycle.com.au

either. During this phase we started to hit our daily 20km walking mark which physically felt amazing but we also started to encounter plague-like swarms of flies, searing desert temperatures, drier, rockier and harsher climate, 100km winds, lightning storms, bush fires and flash flood warnings. Although my cart was heavy at nearly 90kg it was light in comparison to Justin's cart, which at its heaviest weighed nearly 270kg and mostly weighed down by water.

As much weather as the Outback threw at us, it all paled in comparison to the challenge we hit during week five when Morgan started teething and got her two-year-old molars a few months early. A week of painful and sleepless nights saw us suffer severe massive sleep deprivation, nappy rash and short tempers. Our focus had to remain in the present moment and enjoy little things: kindness from a stranger that passed by, friends we met along the trail, a tasty meal, a beautiful shady tree to camp under, a nice moonrise.

IV – The new normal

In this final phase everything began to seem easier, more enjoyable, and more fun. The interesting thing about this phase was that things hadn't actually gotten easier, our capabilities had just expanded. What was impossible at the start just became routine. Temperatures were hitting over 40°C as we had entered spring, but instead of barely making 10km a day we were walking nearly 30km. There were less struggles, more laughter, more playtime, more staring at the stars, more pancake breakfasts.

The most amazing thing about this expedition was seeing our daughter not only survive but thrive. Morgan, who was barely walking at the start of the expedition was now running and climbing trees, finding sticks

for fire, running fast like an emu, spending hours on unstructured play and exploring her surroundings like a seasoned pro. We watched our daughter transform from a risk we had to mitigate to a fully functioning member of our team. By the end of the expedition Morgan, who was born and raised in an apartment in the city, had also spent nearly a quarter of her life sleeping in a tent.

During this phase I hit what I called Adventure Zen. Everything around me was just so alive, vibrant and perfect. Even though I hadn't showered for weeks on end and I was far outside of my comfort zone, I felt more beautiful and capable than I had ever felt in my life. The transition hadn't been easy but it had definitely been worth it.

For Justin, this expedition proved that adventure didn't have to stop when family life began. Perhaps the adventures themselves would evolve but the meaning, joy and reason behind them only strengthened.

After 102 days in the Outback, walking nearly 1,800km, we finished our expedition by jumping in the sea at Port Augusta. The end of the expedition was in many ways an anticlimax and filled with mixed emotions. Justin's previous two expeditions had always been about setting world records – the end was the success.

This expedition in contrast was very different. The end was just the beginning. The walk had expanded our capabilities, our resilience and our ties as a family. The walk had given us the courage to follow our dreams, permission to live life on our own terms, settle down differently and build a life we don't need a vacation from. What they say is true: the journey of 1,000 miles does indeed start with just one, simple step. 🌀

Need to know: For more of Lauren and Justin's adventures visit thejonesys.com

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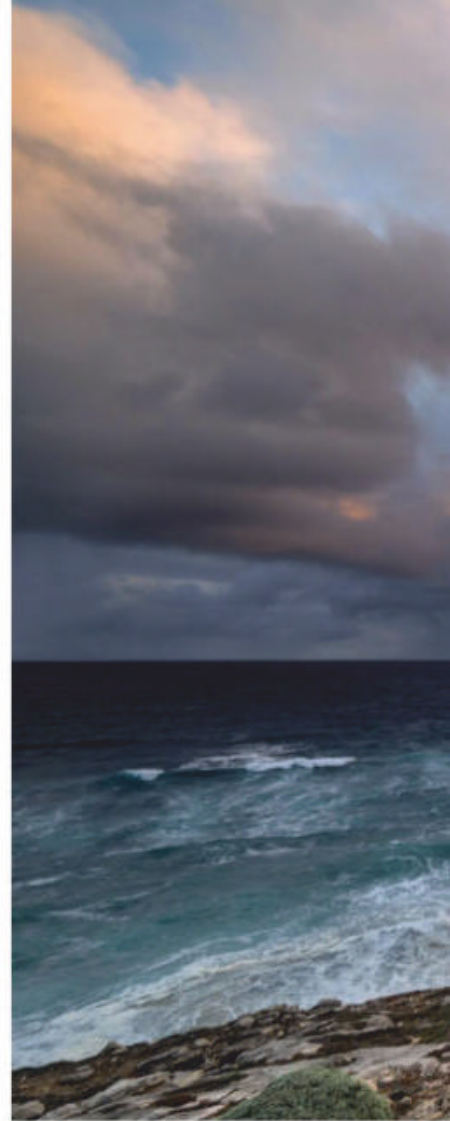
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PICTURE PERFECT

The theme for the Oct online photo comp was 'My Best Bushwalk' and we received so many great photos we just had to share some with you.



THIS MONTH'S WINNING PHOTO



Kahurangi National Park, NZ

Tracey Polglaze, Lavington, NSW

Tracey: "At least twice a year I head back to NZ to take my elderly dad, Max Polglaze, up into the backcountry. Dad's most treasured memories revolve around his years as forest ranger in Kahurangi NP in the South Island. He is a bit of legend in the area for his creative construction of rock shelters, huts and tracks. Unfortunately he suffers short term memory loss these days, and can no longer head for the hills by himself. As children we'd spend our holidays up in these beautiful mountains, with Dad teaching us bush survival, and about the flora and fauna. It is my privilege now to take my turn at being guide. This photo is taken on the Mt Arthur Tablelands heading towards Mt Peel."



Kangaroo Island, SA

Miranda Fittock, Brisbane, Qld

Miranda: "Watching the sun set on our first day of our Kangaroo Island walk, the sky produced some astonishing shades that lit up the ocean and cliffs around us. The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail was a great combination of both flora and fauna, and incredible views. Out of the numerous great walks I have so far conquered in Australia, this stood out amongst the rest."



TRACEY WINS
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Great Ocean Walk, Vic

Nicki Graham, Blacksmiths, NSW

Nicki: "We were travelling through the Great Ocean Walk and had time out on one of the most beautiful, remote and scenic viewpoints. Time out in our lives is so important. The 'perfect bush walk' needs time out for each and every one of us."



Flinders Ranges, SA

Sammi Lanyon, Adelaide, SA

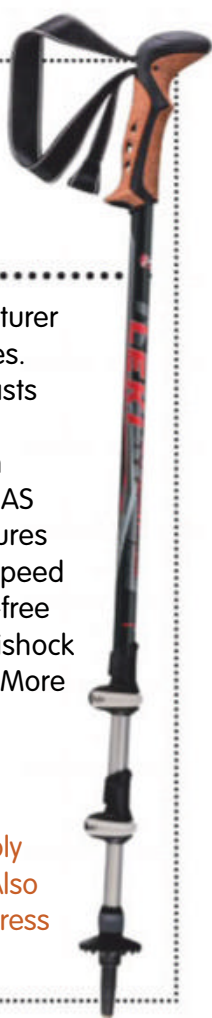
Sammi: "On this bushwalk in the Flinders Ranges we enjoyed the perfect evening on this timber bench. We had a brilliant group of people, perfect views, perfect weather, shared stories and watched 'bush TV' late into the night (sunsets, shooting stars and satellites)."

WIN

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Mary Mackillop walk, SA

Nicki Graham, Blacksmiths, NSW

Nicki: "I embarked on a pilgrimage from Portland, Vic to Penola, SA, walking in the footsteps of our first saint, Mary Mackillop. As I walked over the 220km I felt an incredible connection and respect for those who have walked this land for thousands of years before us. We owe such respect and gratitude to those who have a love and respect of this land we walk on."

The mighty
trees of the
Yarra Valley.
GETTY

DAY WALKS
VIC'S TALLEST
TREES

TALL STORIES

A series of day walks allows you to
experience Victoria's tallest trees.

WORDS AND PHOTOS **LYNDSEY VIVIAN**



"It may not be generally known that within a day's journey of the metropolis there grow the loftiest trees of Australia, and perhaps of the world..." – *The Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers*, 3rd March 1868

THESE are the magnificent mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*), found only in Victoria and Tasmania. As the world's tallest hardwood, they were highly prized for their timber as well as their record-breaking heights. Thankfully, there are still places close to the 'metropolis' of Melbourne to see them. I've decided to visit some of the oldest and most iconic mountain ash trees on three short walks: the Cumberland Walk, Ada Tree Walk and Kalatha Giant Tree Walk.

My first destination is the Cumberland Walk,

a 4km loop near Marysville, featuring the 'Big Tree'. The track begins by weaving through pockets of cool temperate rainforest, where dense canopies of myrtle beech and southern sassafras create a cool and dark microclimate. Ferns and moss cover everything. These other-worldly rainforest patches feel ancient, and I imagine that I'm back in the time of Gondwana. They are also a reminder of the role of fire: without it, mountain ash eventually die and rainforest takes over. To regenerate, an intense fire is needed, killing the adult trees and releasing seed. The seedlings grow rapidly in the ash bed, eventually forming a new even-aged stand. But fires also can't be too frequent, as the trees take decades to mature.

Near the Big Tree I spot a contraption next



Clockwise from left: Ada Tree canopy; Ada Tree; View of the Big Tree; The Big Tree clinometer.

to the track. It's a clinometer installed by Parks Victoria, demonstrating how to measure tall trees using trigonometry. I squint through the eyepiece and find the top of the Big Tree. Using the angle of the clinometer and the distance to the tree, I follow the instructions to calculate the height: 82m. Apparently that's too short – a sign at the tree says it's 87.84m tall. I suppose my clinometer skills need practice! Then I notice a different height on another sign: 84m. I wonder which is correct.

At the Big Tree, I spend time admiring its huge girth and gazing upwards. It's at least 300 years old and is looking its age. Many branches appear broken and there's no large limbs left. Later I walk past several enormous fallen mountain ash trees, slowly decomposing back into the earth.

The track heads south and partly follows an old water race, dug by hand in 1913 in a failed gold mining attempt. Today there are impressive views across a valley where the Cumberland Creek flows to become part of Melbourne's drinking water supply. There's also a short side track to Cora Lynn Falls.

Trees company

My second destination is the 'Ada Tree', near Warburton. It can be an out-and-back walk (3km) or a loop (3.4km). The first section passes through beautiful cool temperate rainforest,



“AT THE BIG TREE, I SPEND TIME ADMIRING ITS HUGE GIRTH AND GAZING UPWARDS.”

lined with tree ferns. I notice the slim rainforest trees periodically giving way to an enormous trunk, where an occasional giant Mountain Ash looms high above the rainforest canopy.

The track emerges from the rainforest and all of a sudden I'm at the Ada Tree. It's huge. There are several other people already on the surrounding boardwalk. Everyone is trying to figure out how to photograph it.

“It's too big to fit!” says one walker. The impressive girth is estimated at 15m and the roots apparently sprawl over half an acre. I walk backwards, trying to photograph the whole tree, but the surrounding vegetation envelops it. Aged between 300 and 400 years old, it's Victoria's second largest tree by volume. After eating my lunch underneath, I return the same way so I can enjoy the rainforest again.

During my research I found a website called Victoria's Giant Trees, run by Brett Mifsud who has spent years measuring them. I email some questions to Brett and the first thing I ask is about the Big Tree: how tall is it?

Brett explains that the Big Tree was thought to have once been 92m, before the top blew off in a 1959 windstorm. In fact, the Cumberland Walk trees, including the Big Tree, were once Victoria's tallest known trees. But that original height was probably wrong.

“In the old days they just used to measure things with a theodolite and it never

triangulated the top of the tree,” Brett says. There were often errors. “Nine times out of ten it would over-estimate the top.”

Long way to the top

In 2000, Brett started to document and measure Victoria's tallest trees using a laser. “The laser was triangulating the top point,” Brett says. “That changed everything.” He worked with an arborist who could climb safely to tree tops. But when they inspected the Big Tree, they found it was unlikely to have ever reached 92m.

“There was two tops, and the bigger of the two was still intact,” Brett says. They measured it at 81.5m, sending the Big Tree tumbling down the list of Victoria's tallest trees. According to Brett's website, that honour goes to a 92.1m tall tree in Beenak.

The Kalatha Tree Walk owes its existence to Brett, who discovered the tree in the early '90s. “It was an anonymous big tree,” Brett says. “I used to take people to it for decades.” It now has a carpark, track and signage. It's Victoria's 12th largest tree by volume, and was named Victorian Tree of the Year in 2016.

The Kalatha Tree is in the scenic Toolangi State Forest. Although short (500m), the track passes through a beautiful patch of forest, surrounded by the fragrant white flowers of the

Victorian Christmas bush. The track climbs gently upwards and I arrive at the tree.

My first impression is of its great age. The canopy is sparse and the branches are mostly broken. Enormous pieces of bark dangle from the lower limbs. I glimpse several hollows higher up, providing home for wildlife. It's much bigger than any other nearby tree, reminding me of an old great-grandparent surrounded by the younger generation. On the way back there's an enormous stump of a tree felled by hand long ago. Deep axe cuts are still evident where planks were inserted, enabling the loggers to climb up the tree.

Although there's other places to see quite tall Mountain Ash, like the Dandenong Ranges, I've particularly enjoyed meeting these iconic and voluminous big trees, with their huge girths and palpable old age. They are special characters with long histories and colourful backstories.

Before heading home, I decide to explore the nearby Wirrawilla Rainforest Walk, a short boardwalk along Sylvia Creek. Halfway along there's a small plant signposted ‘Dawsonia superba – The World's Tallest Moss’. At just eight cm, it's a long way from the lofty heights of the Mountain Ash. Nonetheless I add it to my now-expanding list of record-breaking plant species I've seen, and decide it's a fitting end to my walks. 🌀

Need to know: victoriasgianttrees.weebly.com

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

With its range of animals and wildflowers, Onkaparinga River NP is a great day out.

WORDS **SIMON TRAYHORN**

JUST 40 minutes south of central Adelaide, the Onkaparinga River National Park offers quick access to those seeking a variety of interesting bushwalks and a sense of remoteness. Sandwiched between the suburb of Hackham and the famous vineyards of McLaren Vale, the 1544 hectare park features South Australia's second longest river after the Murray, winding through a deep gorge that stretches for 10km. At the downstream end of the gorge, the river emerges at the historic township of Noarlunga, before entering the Gulf St Vincent at Port Noarlunga.

Before European settlement, these lands were home to the Kaurna people who still retain strong cultural ties to the area, and many local place names such as 'Onkaparinga' and 'Noarlunga' are derived from Kaurna language. There are many walks available in the park, ranging from the long to the short and the difficult to the easy. If you are seeking a quick snapshot of the park's natural heritage, take a one hour hike along the Porosa Track, which leads you down to the river bed and some spectacular cliff faces at the base of the gorge.

While the walk is relatively short, its steep incline makes it more suitable for those bushwalkers with some experience and a good fitness level, and particular care should be taken during the wet months of winter when the track can be a little slippery. High up on

the northern side of the gorge, you enter the Porosa Track from Hepenstal Road and immediately take in the magnificent views of the sprawling Onkaparinga Hills.

As you negotiate the gently meandering track down the hill face, you soon come across several high vantage points on either side of the track, from which you can view the gorge through native scrub.

It's a good idea to linger at these points as you may catch a glimpse of some of the park's 180 bird species, kangaroos, echidnas, koalas and a variety of reptiles living amongst the wildflowers and red gums.

The track begins to flatten out a little as you approach the base of the gorge, where you are greeted by jagged cliff faces and what is currently a dry river bed, edged by saltbush, samphire and wetlands of bull rushes growing under numerous river red gums.

Although the ongoing drought in SA has left much of the gorge dry, the exposed slate coloured rocks of the river bed add to the tranquil beauty of the park as it opens up below the cliffs. You can extend your walk by carefully traversing the smooth rounded rocks of the river bed, giving you an opportunity to more fully explore the gorge. However, keep in mind the steep incline of the track for the return journey, which will certainly provide you with a solid workout. 🌀

Need to know: parks.sa.gov.au

“YOU CAN EXTEND YOUR WALK BY TRAVERSING THE SMOOTH ROUNDED ROCKS OF THE RIVER BED.”

WALK NOTES ONKAPARINGA RIVER NP

See breakout for walk details



Camping out at
Onkaparinga.
PARKS SA.

TAKE YOUR PICK

Here are our top walks in the park

1. Punchbowl Link Trail (2-3hr/6km return/easy-moderate)

This trail links the Sundews trail network with Punchbowl Lookout. You can return via the fire track to create a loop. The trail via the gorge passes through lovely native bushland and offers excellent views of the gorge.

2. Echidna Hike (2 hr/3.5km/moderate)

A narrow trail takes you over moderate slopes and through lovely pink gum, grey box and sheoak bushland. Enjoy the winter and spring floral displays, including stunning orchids. You will see some ruins, get great views of the gorge, and get a good workout.

3. Hardy's Scrub Hike (2hr/4km/easy-moderate)

This patch of native vegetation is an important conservation area with excellent plant diversity. Grey box grows in fertile loam or clay soils, pink gums prefer soils with a sandy well drained surface and a clay or rocky base. Southern cypress pine grows only in sandy loam soil.

4. Gorge Hike (3-4hr/6km/moderate)

Experience the river, as well as the plants and animals in the area. This is a hard hike that descends steeply from the Sundews lookout to the bottom of the gorge. You'll follow the river downstream before returning up the steep slopes to the top of ridge and the carpark. Some sections of this trail are not well defined.

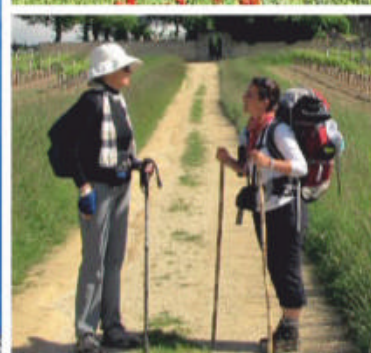
5. Gorge Link (2 hr/3.5km/challenging)

Hike or ride through the park, crossing the river along the way. Please note that the river is impassable during wet periods. You'll descend down the into the gorge before climbing back up. The fire track in and out of the gorge is very steep, only for those with good fitness.

6. Old Noarlunga Hike (2.5 hr/3.2km/moderate)

Cross the swinging bridge to start this trail. You'll discover the re-vegetation that is returning this once heavily grazed land to its original state. There are extensive views over the township of Old Noarlunga and the Onkaparinga River estuary.*

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CLASSIC YARN

Q&A:
MANU FEILDEL

MUD, SWEAT AND CHEERS

Swapping his apron for a rain jacket and boots, TV chef Manu Feildel took on his greatest challenge yet, the Kokoda Track.

INTERVIEW **BRENT MCKEAN**
PHOTOS **ADAM FLIPP**

Left: Manu meets a few friendly locals.



Six years ago celebrity chef Manu Feildel (now 45) walked the Kokoda Track in the name of charity and Great Walks caught up with him after he returned. In the first part of our Classic Yarns series we republish the story.

CELEBRITY chef Manu Feildel knows a thing or two about operating in the heat. He's carved out a career working in some of the busiest kitchens in Europe and Australia before making a name for himself as head chef at Sydney's famous Bilson's, offering contemporary French cuisine. According to The Sydney Morning Herald, he was a key factor in Bilson's "three-hat success". From there Manu set up his own restaurant in ritzy Paddington before finding fame on shows like Ready Steady Cook, MasterChef Australia and most recently My Kitchen Rules. On top of this, Manu won Dancing with the Stars in 2011.

Jump to April 2013 and Manu found himself dealing with a completely different kind of

**Clockwise from left:**

Kokoda success.

The faces say it all!

Smile all you want. Just don't let go of the rope.

"But where's the sauce!?"



heat. Tropical jungle heat. A heat that saps your energy and leaves you breathless. A heat that only Kokoda can throw at you. Manu takes five with *Great Walks* to talk about this new challenge.

GRW: Nine days on the Kokoda Track is pretty heavy going. How did you find it? I had been told that the first three days were the hardest, and then you just get on with it, and that's pretty much what happened. The first day you are very excited and you start walking quite fast, and then you realise you need to take a slower pace or you are never going to last forever. In a few words, it was an amazing, amazing opportunity and when you get to the end you are so satisfied and it is so rewarding that I would be happy to do it again.

GRW: What did you find most challenging about the walk?

It was a personal challenge. It is your mind over your body; you look up and say "My God,

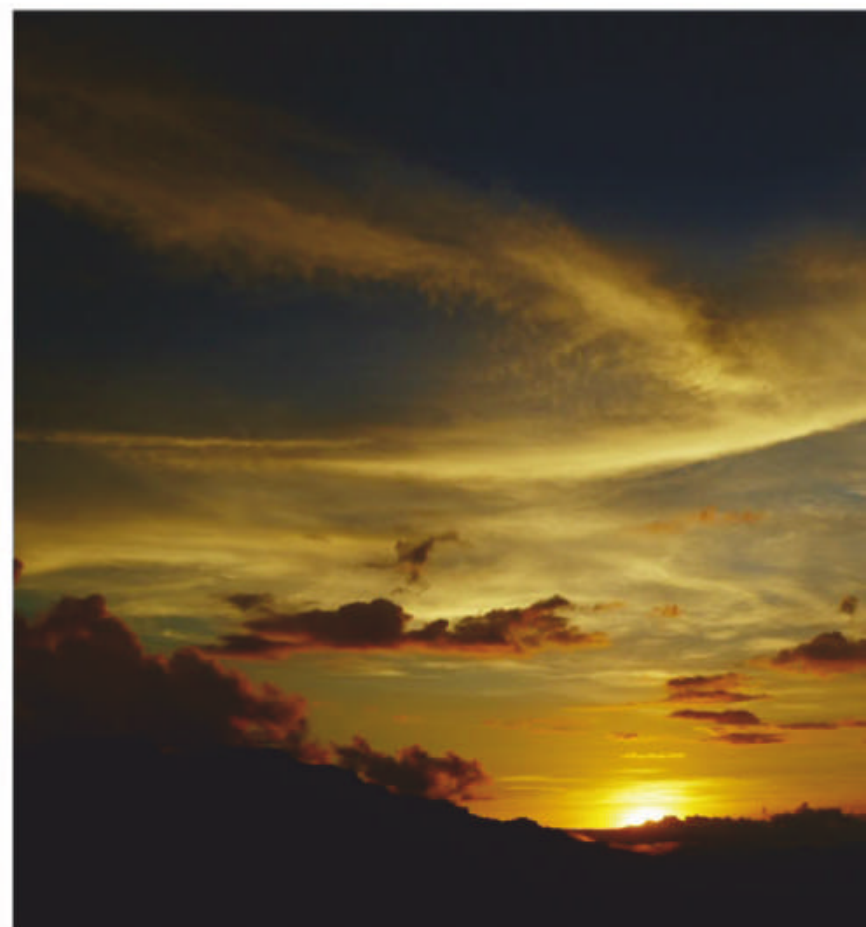
“YOU GET YOUR MIND TO TELL YOUR BODY IT HAS NO CHOICE AND YOU HAVE TO GO AND DO IT.”

it's going to be so hard to get up there" but you get your mind to tell your body it has no choice and you have to go and do it. It's continuously challenging yourself on a daily basis, but every night when you get to camp you realise what you have done and it's a great achievement.

GRW: What did your training involve?

I trained for about three months before I got there, and my involvement was a lot of stairs, a lot of steps. You are working on your legs obviously, and also on the abs, but not too much upper body as such. A lot of sand dunes as well and I went to the Blue Mountains and did a few kays there as well, but pretty much going up and down for a long time.





GRW: Had you done a lot of bushwalking before you took on Kokoda?

That was my first time.

GRW: Did you hike a lot when you lived in France?

No. I was never a very sporty kid. Sport arrived for me about four years ago when I decided I needed to look after myself a bit, and I do enjoy being this size now. I would like to do more hiking in the future. I'd like to go to Malaysia and maybe Africa and do some more.

GRW: So that first day on the trail must have been a big shock?

You have to keep on concentrating on yourself every second. It's slippery, there are treelines, muddy water ... it never stops. There was a bit of a battle between all of us wondering which was the hardest – going up or going down. There was more of us saying going down was the hardest because it's hard on your muscles and you really have to concentrate or else you'll fall on your butt most of the time.

GRW: How much did you know about the Kokoda Track before you did it?

I had done a little bit of research. I didn't want to go there not knowing. But we had a brilliant guide, Wayne from Kokoda Spirit, who knew everything about Kokoda and the war, which was really amazing to hear.

GRW: The Kokoda Track has a profound affect on many people who do it, especially knowing they're walking in the footsteps of Australian soldiers who died on it. How did it make you feel?

It was different because I am not born here,



**“IT’S SLIPPERY,
THERE ARE
TREELINES,
MUDDY WATER
... IT NEVER
STOPS.”**

but I did appreciate that some of the people who were walking with us were teary and emotional about things. I understood why – you have to be silly if you don’t – but knowing that some human beings are able to fight for their country that way and mateship and togetherness was fantastic to hear.

GRW: So tell us about the charity you were raising funds for?

It was for CanTeen, which is to help kids from the age of 12 to 24 who have suffered from cancer or have cancer or have lost family members to cancer, and we raised \$70,000.

GRW: So, the big question. How was the food on the track?

I turned a blind eye to it. It wasn’t good, but you spend so much energy that you are so hungry at times, that anything goes. You just put it in your mouth and chew on it, no matter. I knew I was not going to be there forever so nine days of bad food was okay.

GRW: Did you share a few culinary tricks with the cooks?

I did say that I would send them a little recipe booklet for what they can carry to try to help them to cook something a little bit better, without being too heavy or too expensive.

GRW: If you were to go camping for a weekend getaway, what are a few basic ingredients you would bring?

A few packets of bacon. Bacon that is well wrapped in plastic can last for a while. Everyone likes baked beans. I don’t like that stuff in a tin – spam – that’s pretty gross. I’m not difficult and I can eat anything, but spam – it’s scary. It doesn’t look good and it doesn’t taste good and there’s something wrong with it. We had it cold and fried and warmed up and stewed, and it doesn’t matter what it is in – it doesn’t taste good. 🌀

Need to know: Kokoda Spirit kokodaspirit.com.au; CanTeen canteen.org.au

Clockwise from above:

“I know what’s for dinner!”

Tasting some local delicacies.

Another gorgeous Kokoda sunset.

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Lake O'Hara,
Yoho NP, BC,
Canada



69 Packet hiking food

The ultimate taste test

74 Track Tested treats

New kit tested in the bush

76 Trial and error

Rucksack packing 101

78 Top Gear

The latest kit on the market

80 Reading a weather map

A little knowledge goes a long way

When providing info and opinion on walking gear it's only fair to provide you with the full picture. To properly test a backpack, for instance, requires long-term use in a wide variety of conditions. There aren't enough months in the year to do this for every product, especially when you're talking about a dozen pairs of boots. The key below lets you know where you stand.



STOCK SHOT This is where we showcase what's new in the market and tell you what the manufacturer claims the product does. Over time we'll try to properly test it.



GEAR GUIDE An experienced walker has reviewed a wide range of products and conducted limited testing. This is a guide, rather than a subjective test.



TRACK TESTED We have worn it, walked with it and slept with it, allowing us to provide an independent and balanced assessment of its strengths and weaknesses.





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Great Walks tests out a range of meals on the Larapinta Trail.

WORDS AND PHOTOS **JEMIMA HEADLAM**

LAST winter I completed an end-to-end solo hike of the Larapinta Trail, which I felt was an ideal opportunity to test a variety of food and discover the best trekking meals for our customers. Firstly, there is one important thing to keep in mind: I'm not you and you're not me; we we like different things. I like my food spicy, so I add chilli to literally everything, including some breakfasts. I am not vegetarian/vegan/gluten free/kosher or halal but I have tested and dare I say even enjoyed a number of the vegan meals.

Weight was my biggest consideration as I needed to go as lightweight as possible, having to consider how much the meal weighs in its uncooked form, but also how to deal with packaging after the meal when everything must be carried out. How long does it take to cook? Fuel has a weight and the longer something takes to cook the more fuel it requires. How much water does it require for both clean up and cooking? Lastly, it has to taste good! I'm wasn't here to torture myself, I want a tasty satisfying meal at the end of every day. So here's a review of some of the meal I ate.

Clockwise from right:

Bring plenty of gas on the Larapinta.

GETTY

Dinner time after a long day on the trail.

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Back Country Cuisine

From NZ, Back Country comes in single serve, double and some even come in a five-serve. Pour the suggested amount of boiling water into the packing, which also serves as the bowl so no washing up. Perfect for lazy people like myself. After dinner the packaging went straight into the rubbish zip lock.

Cooked Breakfast: Overall, you'd expect to be grossed out by a bag of hot mash potato (or hash brown as they refer to it), egg, beef squares and tomato but it had a surprisingly nice texture. The beef (supposed to be substitute for bacon?) was not too chewy or old-beef-tasting, and the tomato pieces were nicely defined with a pump tartness. Bonus points for it being gluten free and not being porridge (I hate porridge).

Roast Chicken: Read the instructions! I'm not great with following instructions so I added way too much water to the bag, but apart from that the mash was delicious with the gravy (with added chilli) and the corn and peas. The most annoying part was the separate satchel for the mash potato. The added packaging and extra steps makes it more fiddly, some flavoured powder gets lost when you pull it out of the main bag plus a bunch of the peas escaped. So it's not the most convenient of meals. BC's infamous 'chicken' squares make an appearance in this dish as well, and I wasn't a massive fan of the squares of stuffing, although I can see how others might appreciate them.

Nasi Goreng: A classic veggie gluten-free fried rice dish, I enjoyed this more than I expected but I found the rice to be a little crunchy. Okay so maaaaaybe I was impatient and hungry and got into the bag before the time was up,

sure blame me! I liked the sweet crunch of the fried onion and capsicum, the egg had a slightly funny texture but the flavour was really nice. The sticky, salty, mild honey soy sauce bound the whole dish up without overpowering it and I loved the addition of the pumpkin seeds. I'd love to see BC swap out the egg for tofu to make this an option for vegans.

For info on Back Country Cuisine visit:
seatosummitdistribution.com.au



Camper's Pantry

From Tasmania, this newer company uses a similar cook-in-the-bag method to BC, and also has a range of freeze-dried vegetables to add to whatever meal you are making. Local to Australia and the meals contain real meat – mmm, real meeeeat.

Vegetables – Broccoli, Peas and Carrot: Throw in with couscous and a packet of instant soup and you've got yourself a meal right there. The Broccoli is my favourite. It's perfectly cooked, with the ever so slight crunch of a steamed broccoli. I found the carrots had a slightly funny texture and taste and I admit I picked them out, not a fan. Peas, which I normally hate, were really nice, fresh green and juicy. Add your own cheese and a few good dashes of Tabasco to really make this dish. On another occasion I added the CP Peas and Broccoli to instant noodles for a healthy, instant meal.

Vermicelli Pudding: Technically a desert but whatever, I had it for breakfast. Stop judging. Sleepy-eyed I didn't read the instructions and added too much water and ended up with a soupy pudding. Still the flavours are really good and pretty filling for only 55 grams. The sultanas were plump and juicy and the overall taste was not sickeningly sweet as you might expect from a dessert.

For info on Campers Pantry visit: camperspantry.com.au



Three Capes Gear & Gourmet

From Tassie again, this little company knows that the best part of trekking is the food and they don't hold back on flavour. Delicious food but generally less convenient since the meals must be simmered in a pot like ... well, like regular food.

Thai Chicken Noodles: Loved the translucent packaging so you can see the contents, and the veggies actually look like veggies (ahem, because they actually are). In fact all the ingredients look exactly like what they should look like, so this looks very appetising! And is that REAL CHICKEN? YUM! The noodles were cooked to perfection and the sauce packed with loads of flavour and a nice light spice. It does leave a little washing up but it's super lightweight and the packaging weighs very little to carry out. Addition suggestions: a spoonful of peanut butter! Thickens up the sauce and gives it a pad Thai/satay vibe. Gluten free and delish. Seven mins cooking time.

Pear and Strawberry Crumble: The package appeal of this dish is unbeatable. You can see the gorgeous pieces of pear and strawberry with rich crunchy crumble. Downside: it needs 10 mins of slow stewing over a low heat (aka, fuel time is required, so is a bit of clean up). The fruits re-hydrate well and are very refreshing, and the crumble has a lovely nutty crunch.

Gluten Free Apple Cinnamon and Quinoa porridge: I'm the last person to opt for porridge for breakfast, usually within an hour of consumption I'm starving, but breakfast was delicious! I really enjoyed it and I wasn't immediately hungry straight after. Conscious of my limited gas reserves I let it soak in boiling water for 10 mins before reheating it, rather than simmering for 10 mins. The cinnamon is present but not overpowering, the amounts of apple and sultana were perfect, and I only needed to add half the milk and brown sugar that was supplied. I'd have licked the pot if my head had fit.

For info on Three Capes Gear & Gourmet visit:
3capesgearandgourmet.com.au

Strive

Yet another Tassie-based camp food company, Go Tassie! Similar to 3 Capes Gear and Gourmet, clear plastic packaging and the food needs to be cooked in the pot – downside of that being that it uses more fuel and there is always a clean up.

Beef Massaman Curry: I wasn't a fan of this one. It was my first Strive meal and I had high hopes after hearing so many good reviews. In the first place it took way too long to cook and I was anxious about this gas guzzler using up 20mins of precious fuel. There was also a bit of cleaning up to do. In terms of taste I found the spices were a little imbalanced, and it needed veggies!

Chilli Con Carne: Now this is better – the chilli only took 10-12 mins of continual cooking, almost half the time to cook as the Massaman, and the flavours were more in harmony too. It needed some extra chilli of course (I think everything does, but that might just be me).

Lentil Curry Dhal: This seems to be a Strive favourite among everyone, and with good reason. There is something so hearty about a good, balanced dhal, the flavours were great. Still, it took longer than most meals to cook and was not dissimilar to a ready made supermarket dhal.

For info on Strive Food visit: strivefood.com.au





Snacks

Em's Power Cookie: superfood is an understatement for these bad boys. Developed by ultramarathon runner and nutritionist Em in NZ, these cookies never fail to satisfy. When water supply is limited they make the perfect substitute for breakfast. These cookies have it all: oats, chocolate chunks, hidden healthy bits, like raisins, plus they don't freeze and break your teeth at altitude. No need for water and no clean up, they don't leave a funny taste in your mouth, oh and those chunks of chocolate.... Did I mention the chunks of chocolate? She does other flavours too (in order of personal favs): Choc & Cranberry, Peanut Butter Bomb, Choc Oat Explosion and Apricot Attack.

For more info: powercookies.com

Griffin Jerky's Chipotle Adobo Beef Jerky: I think we've established now that I like spicy food and Sydney-based Griffin's beef jerky does not disappoint! Real beef, dried and made super tasty right here in NSW. If you're up for the challenge it's also available in fiery Srirachuan. Heat not your thing? The Classic (unspiced) is super tasty too. Gluten free, but safe to say it's not vegan friendly.

For more info: griffinjerky.com.au



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TRACK TESTED TREATS



Great Walks tests out a range of outdoor and indoor gear.



Jabra Elite 65e headphones

Now most of us wouldn't go bushwalking with music blaring in our ears but that doesn't mean a good pair of wireless headphones isn't handy for other situations like working out in the gym, which is when I use mine the most. So I scored a pair of Jabra Elite 65e bluetooth headphones over Christmas and have been using them a lot. They are designed to take you through your day as you switch between calls and music on-the-move. By combining active noise cancellation from four microphones with passive noise cancellation from the oval-shaped earbuds and snug-fitting Jabra EarGels, the Elite 65e headphones make even the busiest of cafés sound as quiet as a library. And this is great in the gym, on the bus or plane – places like that. You can charge them via your computer so no worries about changing batteries and the sound comes strong and clear via the bluetooth application on your phone – even when running outdoors. I keep my headphones in my gym bag with everything else I need for a workout and probably charge them every couple of weeks. I really like them and love the freedom they offer by not being attached to my phone by a long wire.

RRP: \$329 Website: jabra.com.au

Review: Brent McKean

TNF Ultra Fastpack III Mids

Fastpacking is defined as a cross between ultralight hiking and trail running, the idea being you powerwalk up the hills and run down them. In practice this is a niche activity mostly enjoyed by nutters trying to break speed records on long distance trails in the US, but the gear that has evolved for fastpacking is also useful for any hikers trying to save weight.

Ultra Fastpack IIIs are light (436g each, size US8.5), flexible and supportive mid-cut boots that are perfectly appropriate footwear for single or multi-day small to medium pack hikes

on almost any terrain. Sadly my testing phase did not include through-hiking the Appalachian Trail, but I did get out and about in the Victorian Alps on a variety of surfaces (soft single track, granite scrambling, gravel and tarmac road) and was impressed with the comfort and performance of these boots. (NB: They also come in a low-cut model.)

Straight out of the box I found the UF111s to be quite wide. I have a narrow foot and had to go half a size smaller than usual, but these should suit the classic wide Aussie foot well. Once properly sized they felt immediately good with only a little stiffness obvious around the ankles, but this disappeared after the first couple of kilometres. The boots gripped my feet properly both uphill and downhill and I didn't experience any heel lifting or toe bumping, and the proprietary FastFoam EVA midsole gave a good combination of cushioning, responsiveness and flex. I even jogged for ten minutes to test the fastpacking concept – they performed adequately but won't be replacing my trail runners anytime soon.

The nylon uppers seem like they would be able to take a bit of punishment, although the lightweight nature of the model does require some sacrifices e.g. fabric lace loops rather than metal cleats and a flimsy insole that you might want to replace. The Gore-Tex membrane passed the bathtub test and the dual-density Vibram Megagrip outsole offered good traction, although I didn't get to test it in wet conditions.

Overall I was happy with the TNF Ultra Fastpack IIIs and I'm looking forward to taking them on a longer walk.

RRP: \$300 Website: thenorthface.com.au

Review: Dan Slater



Panda Child Carrier Review

Choosing a child carrier is so different than choosing a traditional backpack. For starters, your cargo is so much more precious, although unfortunately, often an awkward shape for carrying on your back ... and it moves!

We all know how to carefully pack a backpack, with the weight low down and close to your hips. This doesn't apply to a child carrier. Unless you flip your kid upside-down (not recommended), the weight will be at the top and away from your pack. It's not ideal, but it's what makes choosing a well-designed child carrier so important.

I've been testing the Panda Child Carrier on some local walks around the Blue Mountains in NSW. I'm lucky that my youngest, 3-year-old Harper, enjoys being carried in a pack, although she also enjoys playing bongo drums on my head!

This is the second child carrier I've used and by the far the best. Despite the challenges that come with carrying another human on your back over rough and hilly ground through the bush, the Panda Child Carrier did a fantastic job of keeping Harper steady and comfortable on my back. I was able to have her there for longer stints without taking it on and off for breaks.

The carrier is reasonably light at 2.8kg and is suitable for kids from 7 months up to about 20kg (Harper weighs 13kg). It features a retractable stand to help make loading your kid easier on the ground. There are also some spacious zippered pockets for carrying food and gear and a sun shade which packs away when not in use. There's also space for a small water bladder and drink holders for bottles. The all important harness is adjustable and really easy to use.

All up, the Panda Child Carrier is a well-built, comfortable and safe carrier. I'd recommend it for anyone who enjoys taking their young kids off the beaten track.

RRP: \$390 **Website:** pandacarrier.com.au

Review: Scott Thomas



Mophie Powerstation Wireless XL

Low battery anxiety. Yes, it's a thing. So much so the condition 'nomophobia' (a contraction of 'no-mobile-phobia') looks set to be included in the next edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the standard reference used by mental health experts around the world to diagnose and treat psychiatric illnesses.

If you're the kind of person who freaks at the first sign of a red battery icon, a Mophie Powerstation Wireless XL might help calm your anxiety. The 10,000 mAh portable battery is about the same size as a pack of cards, weighs just 180g, and can extend your phone's battery life by up to 48 hours.

You can connect your phone or tablet with a USB 2.0 cable or, even better, if it offers Qi charging just rest it on top of the battery – no cable required!

RRP: \$149.95 **Website:** mophie.com

Review: James Ostinga

THE WEIGHTING GAME

Marcus O'Dean tells why "90 litres is a lot for a little man to fill".



WORDS **MARCUS O'DEAN**

Editor of *Great Walks*' sister publication *Australian Sporting Shooter* and author of *Bushwalking Basics*, Marcus has spent much of his life in the outdoors.

WE will duly venture into the educational subject matter of this column, but first readers may like to know where the inspiration for my intro came from. It is a bastardisation of the chorus from a dirge-like humorous song, which was played often on Roy And HG's *This Sporting Life* radio show on 2JJ in the eighties. "That line was, '18 wheels is a lot for a little man to stop', indicating someone being splattered by a semi-trailer. A Google search has revealed nothing, so I would really appreciate some help from readers here. Now my barely relevant digression is off my chest, we will proceed.

Readers will by now know that I have an aversion to carrying too much and I have waxed on that topic quite a bit. Consequently, when my esteemed editor Brent asked me to write on carrying, I thought I would explore not what to pack, but rather how to pack and carry an overnight bushwalking pack. To do this, I will mercilessly plagiarise myself from my 1998 out-of-print book *Basic Bushwalking*. To assist in visualising some of the ensuing tips, I have hand-coloured an old drawing from the book showing where items may go for comfort and balance. So, on with the tips:

1 When you stop, even if it is only for a short time, get the pack off and stretch. You will be happy you did when you have cooled down in camp.

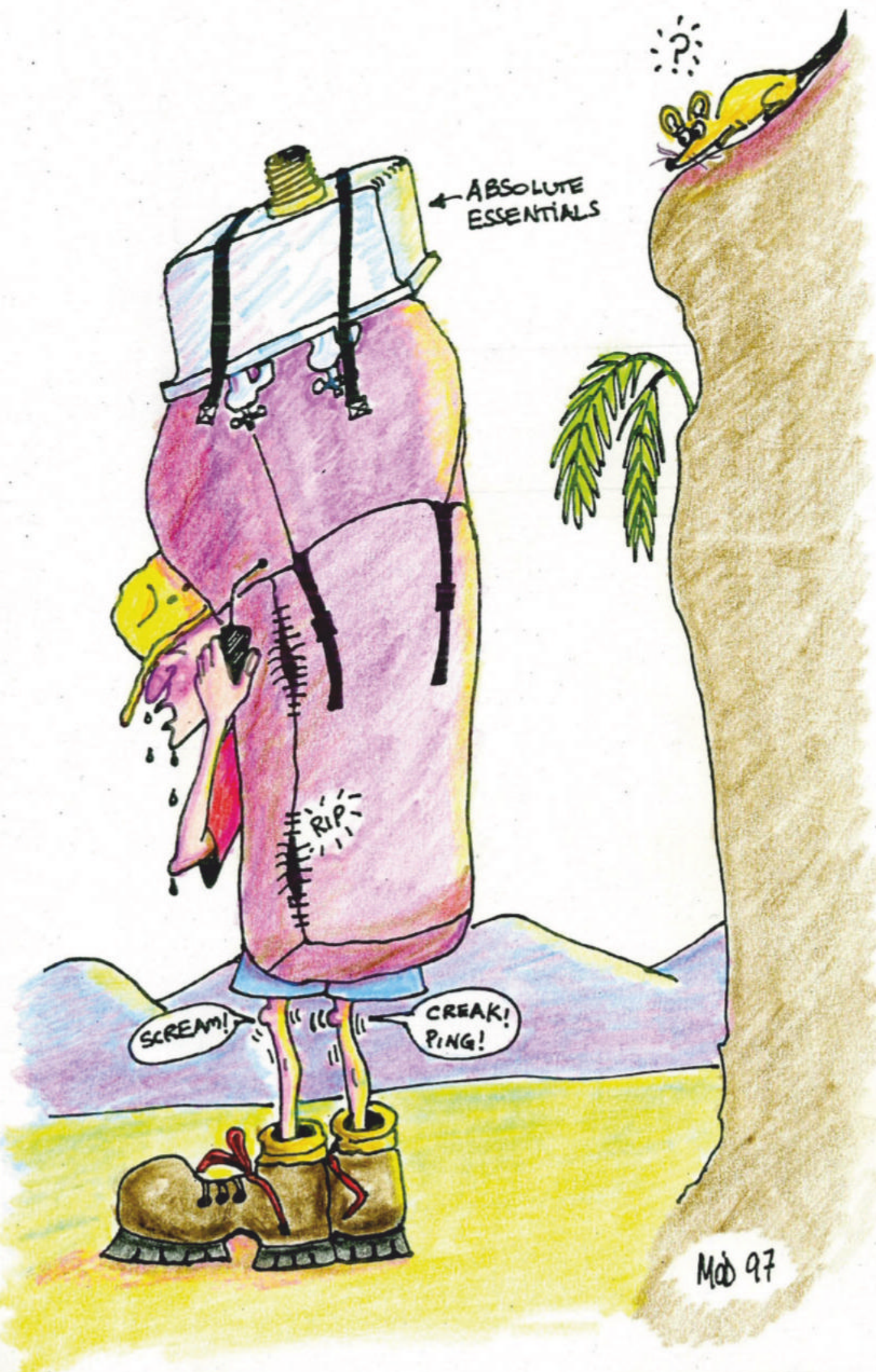
2 On momentary stops, lean against trees or rocks to take the weight off your back and hips.

3 Use a straight, dead branch or walking pole to take weight off your footfall, enlisting the unused arms and shoulders to take some of the weight from your legs. Drag the stick from behind and drive off from behind, rather than placing the stick in front of you and planting it. Watch good cross country skiers to get the idea on energy efficiency with poles.

4 Employ the 'Indian Step', covered in a previous column, to keep legs fresh and improve endurance.

5 Ensure your harness is adjusted so the cinched-in hip belt takes a greater percentage of the weight you bear.

6 In the evenings in camp, give each other back and leg massages near a cosy fire.



7 If you have the choice of jumping over, or walking around, an obstacle, take the latter course, possibly avoiding injury or cumulative joint damage.

8 If climbing, scrambling or skiing are on the agenda, requiring fine balance and coordination, pack heavy, dense items low and in close to your back. This lowers your centre-of-gravity, aiding balance. Cinching in the chest strap is also recommended to clamp the load in on your shoulders. It is no fun when the top of your pack is swinging away from you, pulling you off balance as you edge around a crag.


9 Ensure your fuel bottle is closed tight and the O-ring is serviceable so food contamination and fire risk is avoided.

10 Keep those items you are likely to need handy, like your jumper, rain jacket, snack food, compact camera or sketchbook, water bottle (if you are not using those bladder things – there is one reason I don't) and first aid kit.

11 Keep a plastic cup or piece of aquarium air tube handy to pick up fresh

opportunity water laying in rock ledge depressions on creek-less plateaus or from drips in overhangs.

12 Be neat and keep a mental note of where you pack things in your rucksack. The more you do it the same way, the easier it becomes and the faster this logistical chore will become. An easy way to achieve this is to compartmentalise like stuff e.g. clothes, bulk food etc into individual cloth bags (stuff sacks). A handy friend sewed me up half a dozen from light gauge cotton and included nylon cord drawstrings with toggles made by Coughlan and others. Separate your tent into two or three packages so they fit into spaces that neatly accommodate the fly, inner, poles and pegs, if muggins is carrying a whole tent.

By being neat, organised and mindful when you carry, you will free up time and headspace, mitigate unnecessary wear and tear on your body and, in all likelihood, be carrying mostly essentials with a few compact little luxuries that make your walk just that much more special. 




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Photo: Jemima Headlam, Location: Mount Sonder, Larapinta Trail, NT



Hilleberg Allak 3 tent

Hilleberg's freestanding three-person tent is strong and light. Like the popular two-person Allak 2, the Allak 3 boasts two entrances and two integrated vestibules. It's part of the all-season Red Label series, with tents that prioritise lighter weight and high strength for tough weather conditions. The Allak 3 will accommodate three people and their gear. An optional mesh inner tent is available.

RRP: \$US1160 Website: hilleberg.com

Lowe Alpine Altus packs

The Altus has a structured harness with hip belts that are the right combination of strength and flex. This adjustable back-length pack has a simple system for adjusting the distance between your shoulder straps and hip belt. Other features include a U-shaped front zip. The extendable lid lets you increase the volume of the pack by 5L.

RRP: from \$279.95

Website: intertrek.com.au



TOP GEAR



Check out these 10 recently released outdoor products.



Nemo Tensor sleeping mats

The Nemo range has been reworked for 2019, going right back to the drawing board. Valves are a 'big deal this year' according to founder Cam, who's still knee-deep in redesigns 17 years after starting the company. The Tensor range now includes a high-volume, ultralight pump sack for convenient pad inflation. Nemo has also unleashed the 3 inch, 23°C, 555gm Tensor Alpine – with Spaceframe baffles for a quieter sleep – which could turn out to be a real game changer.

RRP: from \$209.95

Web: nemoequipment.com

THERM-A-REST Space Cowboy 7C sleeping bag

The Space Cowboy is a favourite for summer campers. Built with eraLoft water-resistant synthetic insulation, SynergyLink Connectors and Zoned Insulation, the bag is among the lightest (570gm) and most packable in its class.

RRP: \$329

Website: spelean.com.au

Macpac Icefall

The Icefall's great warmth-to-weight ratio and improved moisture management is achieved through 'zoned insulation': 800 loft HyperDRY water-resistant RDS goose down through the body, arms and hood and then in moisture-prone areas — chin, shoulder and cuff panels — there's PrimaLoft Gold synthetic insulation with Cross-Core Technology.

RRP: \$499.99

Website: macpac.com.au



Rumpl outdoor blanket

If you've ever looked down at your boring old quilt and wished for something beautiful this US company has filled that niche. There's down, synthetic and even ground covers with every design under the rainbow; from fades to Jeremy Collins artist prints to gorgeous sew patterns to flowers and beyond. Independent reviews from US buyers glow at the warmth, size, beauty and durability – we're looking forward to being the envy of our mates at the next fireside with one of these to snuggle into at the end of a long day.

RRP: from \$149.95

Website: rumpl.com.au

THERM-A-REST NeoAir UberLite mattress

Thermarest has released the lightest insulated air mattress available, the 250gm UberLite.

Small in size and big on comfort at 6.4cm thick, it compresses small enough to fit in your pocket and has an R rating of 2. This means you'll be able to chuck a mat the size of a beer can into your pack at half the weight of what most of us currently have at home. Available in small, regular and large.

RRP: \$424.95 **Website:** spelean.com.au

Macpac Nitro Pullover

A versatile mid layer for days in the mountains, this super light active insulated pullover is warm and very breathable. Clever features include Polartec Alpha Direct lining for ultralight warmth (with regulation of body temperature via a unique polyester weave), thumb loops, quick drying material and a super-stashable slim fit small package.

RRP: \$149.99

Website: macpac.com.au

Osprey Rook/Renn backpack

Osprey's new entry level backpacks offer clean lines in neat packages, with volumes perfect for lightweight travellers and hikers wanting an ultra comfortable do-it-all friend. Sizes range from 50L to 65L in both men and women's fit; the separate bottom compartment, hydration pocket, highly adjustable Airspeed back panel, raincover, zippered hip pockets etc are all there. Best of all the smaller size would breeze straight through carry-on.

RRP: from \$199.95

Website: osprey.com/au

Hilleberg Mesh Tent 1 & Tarp 5

The Mesh Tent 1 is an ideal choice for the minimalist bushwalker. Weighing just 410gm, it offers light protection from night time insects and can be set up with trekking poles or by suspending the ridgeline. It is designed to pair with the Tarp 5 and the combo offers an impressively light warm-weather shelter solution weighing only 730gm.

RRP: Mesh Tent 1: \$US220; Tarp 5: US\$170 **Website:** hilleberg.com

INTERPRETING CHAOS



Knowing how to read a weather map will help you prepare for the unexpected on your next bushwalk.

WORDS_PAUL KING

ONE of the most important things you need to do when planning a bushwalk is check the weather. It's easy to find out predicted temperature and if there's a chance of rain with the help of the television or internet, but this doesn't tell you which direction the rain will be coming from, whether there's a chance of a thunderstorm coming through or what the wind will be like on the day. Once you unlock the mystery of reading a weather map, you'll be able to predict if there's any chance of rain or storms and what gear you'll need to take. Just don't forget that chaos theory (and the butterfly effect) will always play a role in the weather.

Rainfall

Actual and possible rainfall is indicated as blue-filled shapes on colour weather maps. It can also be predicted by looking at the pressure cells on a map and understanding the direction the weather system is moving in – weather systems move west to east in southern Australia, while in northern Australia they tend to move east to west with the exception of cyclones, which are highly unpredictable.

Wind speed

Wind speed can be indicated by small lines on the map, with an increasing number of ticks indicating strengthening wind speeds. It can also be predicted using the isobars on a weather map.

Isobars and pressure cells

Isobars are the lines on a map that link areas of equal air pressure – when they form a closed loop, this is known as a pressure cell. These play an important role in wind direction, as air flows anticlockwise in high pressure cells (marked H), which are generally



Left: Knowing what the weather will do is as important as choosing the right gear.

Far left: A waterproof map comes in handy.

associated with stable weather. Air flows in a clockwise direction in low pressure cells (L), which often bring unsettled weather. The winds are caused by the flow of air from high pressure cells to low pressure cells – the closer the isobars, the greater the variation in pressure and the stronger the winds as they circulate around the pressure cells.

Tropical cyclones

These relatively small but intense low pressure cells are marked with TC and their name on weather maps. They usually bring heavy rain and strong winds to coastal areas and further inland.

Fronts

When a new air mass arrives in a region it forces the old one out; the barrier between the two is called a front. Cold fronts are marked as a line with solid triangles, which indicate the direction that the front is moving. They form when a cooler body of air moves underneath a warmer one, forcing the warm moist air to rise, and are usually associated with a decrease in temperature, clouds and possible thunderstorms. Warm fronts occur when warm air mass moves towards and over a cooler air mass, creating clouds and even rain as it rises and cools. These are marked as lines with semi-circles. In both cases, developing fronts may be marked with a small circle between the semi-circles or triangles, while a decaying front is marked with a plus symbol.

Ridges and troughs

When air from a high pressure cell enters a region of low pressure, a ridge forms (usually shown as a protrusion from the isobars of the cells) – these are usually associated with fine

weather. Troughs, on the other hand, appear when air from a low pressure cells enters a region of high pressure (shown as U-shaped fluctuations in the isobars) and are associated with unsettled weather and precipitation. A dashed line is usually drawn along the centre of a trough.

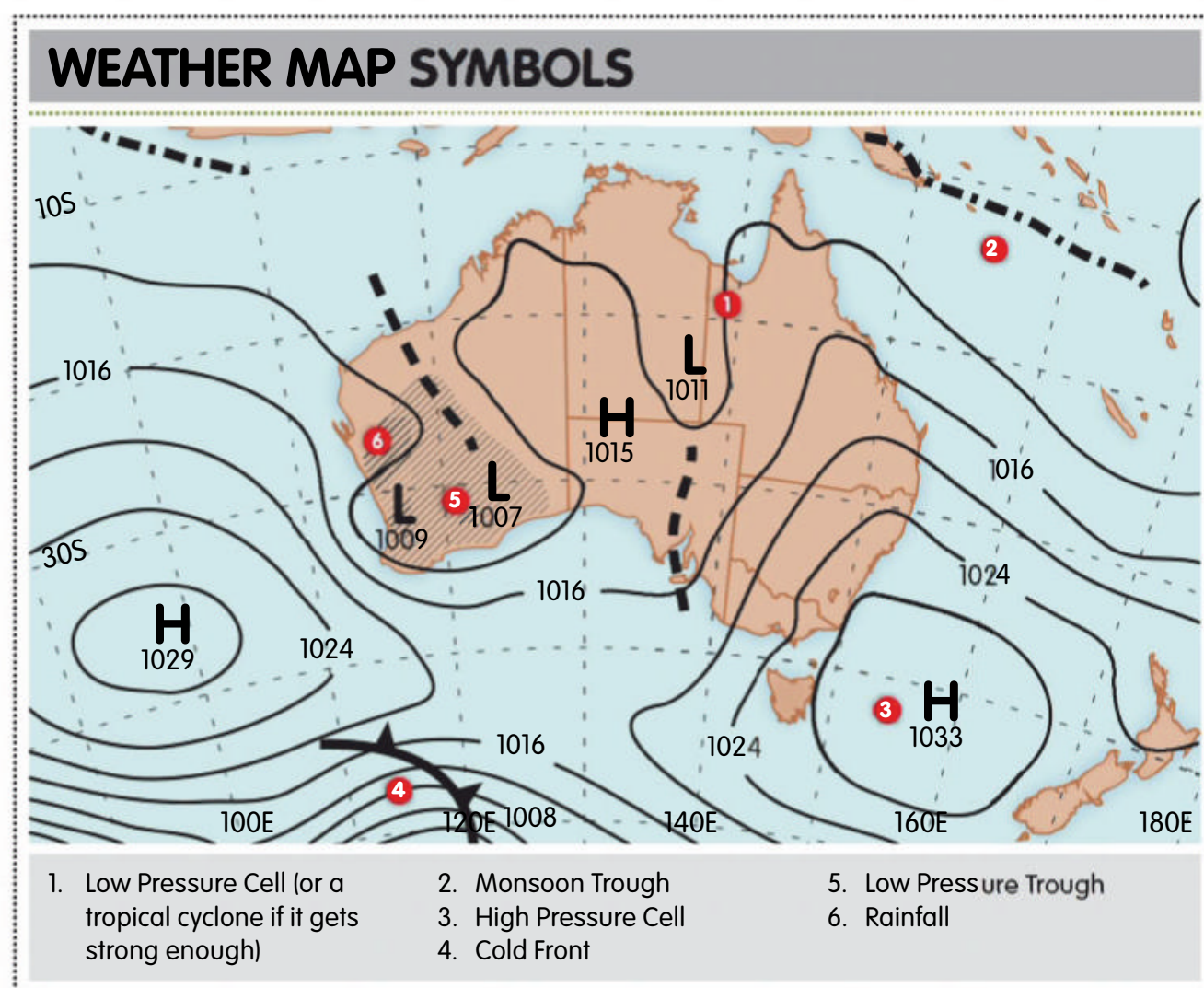
The butterfly effect

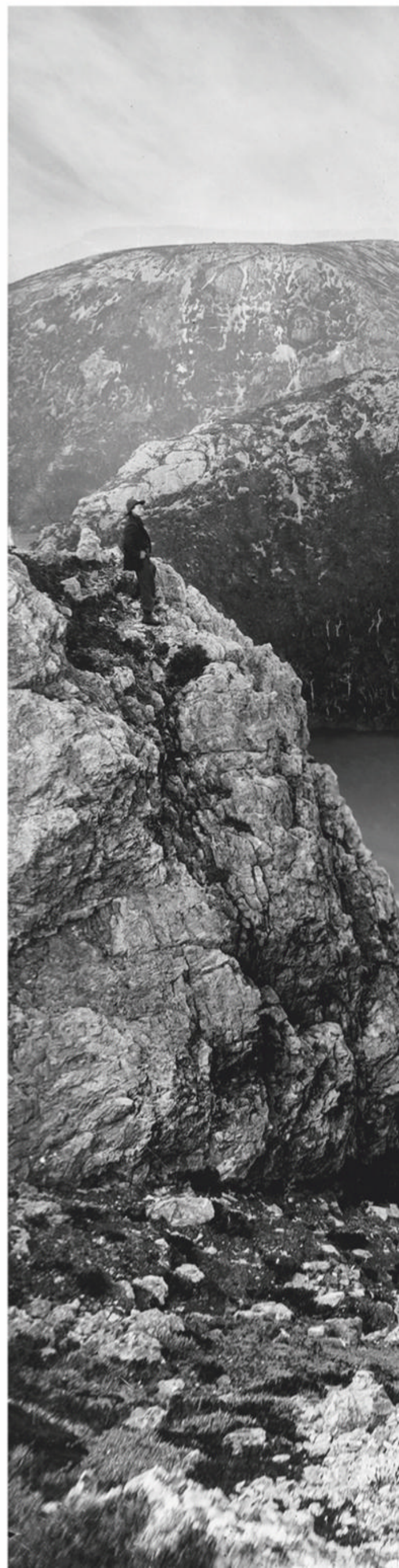
According to chaos theory creator Edward Lorenz, a tiny shift in the initial conditions, such as a butterfly beating its wings, can cause large changes in the long-term. As a result, forecasters can only accurately predict the

weather for about a week ahead – and even then it's probably going to change. So don't forget to look at a weather map the night before and on the day of your trip and be prepared for any sudden changes.

Tides

If doing a coastal walk check when low and high tides occur so you can cross an area in safety. Unlike the weather, this can be accurately predicted (thanks to the moon) and can be found on state maritime services websites, which also give alerts for dangerous conditions. 🌀





FEATURE
CRADLE
MOUNTAIN
COUPLE

KINDRED SPIRITS

The history of Tasmania's wilderness is filled with colourful characters and none more so than Gustav Weindorfer and Kate Cowle.

WORDS **KATE LEGGE**

Clockwise from left:

Crater Lake, 1950.
STEPHEN SPURLING. QVM

Kate and her siblings on a ramble near Forth River (L to R: Dan, Blanche, Charles, Bertie, Kate).
PETER SIMS COLLECTION, LAUNCESTON.

Gustav and Ron Smith lugging packs to a hut outside Cradle Valley, 1910.
RON SMITH. QVM



JOURNALIST Kate Legge's new book *Kindred: A Cradle Mountain Love Story* traces the unconventional lives of Gustav Weindorfer and Kate Cowle who fell in love and lived an amazing life in the Tasmanian wilderness. They were instrumental in turning Cradle Mountain into a national park and pioneering eco-tourism. In this extract from Kate Legge's book *Gustav*, Kate and their friends Ron Smith and Walter Black explore Cradle Mountain in December 1909.

"Morning broke with the loud, harsh cry of the currawongs, the squawking of inquisitive parrots and the shrill call of white cockatoos. It was a perfect day. They took Smith's advice in choosing a path over the ridge between Crater Lake and Dove Lake on their way to the foot of the crag. Though the sky was clear, the temperature above would be nippy and conditions could change in a flash. Kate wore layers of woollen underwear beneath her ankle-length skirt, with a jacket over her long-sleeved blouse, a wide-brimmed hat and stout, leather lace-up boots.

The men's trousers allowed for a freer stride, even with puttees protecting shins, their hobnailed leather boots coated in beeswax and fat scraped from animal hides to weatherproof them. They carried packs with a billy, bread, jam and tea for picnic stops along the way. Gustav – always at the helm, a step or three ahead – found the swiftest path up, warning the others of loose footholds as they clambered over stones that reminded them of broken earthenware crockery, halting occasionally to

study a plant or gaze above at a white gull with a scarlet – coloured beak soaring in the sky. On the plateau, where they crowded around a cushion plant, Kate enthralled by its deceptive voluptuousness, one of the party fancifully suggested these plants were like upholstered poufs where the lofty spirits 'knelt in reverence to the silent mount's superior age'

By noon the climbing demanded hands as well as feet over boulders that ranged in size 'from travelling trunks to house-like dimensions', proving troublesome to navigate. Progress was thwarted by large crevices between the boulders, some of them iced slickly and impossible to grip, with none of the handrails often provided by tree branches or sturdy shrubs anchored to earth. Sometimes they retraced their steps only to find they'd abandoned a better track for a worse course.

Ancient wilderness

Once over the lip of the crags, they rested below the saddle that gives the mountain its cradle before the final 100-foot climb up the south-eastern slope to the highest pinnacle. Collecting snow in the billy, they boiled water using bleached branches and roots from the sparse, low-growing vegetation for kindling. Gustav studied the rocks encircling them. There had been scant geological surveys of the region, with assumptions of Cradle's height largely guesswork, the history of its evolution untold.



Over the decades ahead, science would fathom the miracle of dolerite found in South Africa, India, South America, Australia and Antarctica, through new discoveries about the fate of Gondwana. When the supercontinent broke apart, the immense strain on the earth's crust forced the intrusion of magma into thick sills between sequences of older rocks, eventually cooling to form the dolerite columns exposed through 180 million years of weathering and erosion.

Gustav had long been intrigued by the riddle of flora shared by South America, Antarctica and Australia, proffering theories on ice drifts transporting seeds from one continent to another. As they drank billy tea in the basin below the Cradle, he speculated on the fault lines calibrating a huge pillar of rock that stood 20 feet above its neighbours. Seismic disturbance had twisted upper sections of the rock, estimated to be 5 feet in diameter, on its axis, the breaks resembling the knuckled joints of a giant's finger. Smith and Kate were distracted by grasshoppers and lizards in a search for wildlife on a day where the elements aligned, urging them onwards and upwards to the top.

The men reached the summit first after a further hour of exertion, cheering Kate's arrival soon afterwards at the highest point, which was marked by the broken remains of the wooden trigonometrical station erected by surveyors in 1854. She must have relished the honour of beating her fair-skinned sisters to this rooftop.



Even while hushed by an overwhelming sense of insignificance, there was exhilaration in the accomplishment, and she had thrice passed the test with Mt Buffalo, Mt Roland and now the Cradles, placing her in a league of one, the pride of her husband in their joint achievement meaning more than applause from any other quarter. Up this high, pulses racing from exertion, each was equal to the other.

They spent three hours identifying those peaks they knew, such as Barn Bluff, Black Bluff, Mt Roland and St Valentine's Peak, wondering at the others, squinting at the strip of Indian Ocean to the west and the blue of Bass Strait in the north, counting the lakes dotted about like tiny mirrors sewn into embroidered fabric.

Clockwise from above:

Gustav and Kate at camp near Crater Lake, 1910.

RON SMITH. QVM

Gustav Weindorfer, 21, before sailing for Australia.

SHEFFIELD MUSEUM.

Katie Cowle as a young woman.

PETER SIMS COLLECTION, LAUNCESTON.

Giant grass trees in Cradle Valley, 1905.

STEPHEN SPURLING. QVM

Gordon River.

STEPHEN SPURLING. QVM

View of Barn Bluff from Cradle's dolerite pillars.
TASMANIAN TOURISM BUREAU




“HE TOSSED AROUND IDEAS FOR A NATIONAL PARK, AN ACCOMMODATION HOSTEL, ONE IDEA ON TOP OF THE OTHER,”

earth's crust, readying them for a vision others could not realise. Smith was sympathetic to the scheme outlined on the summit, while Black hung back, reticent, wondering how they would pay for the venture, his energies given to extracting ore from the ground. Tourism was barely an asterisk in the state's budget, its revenue columns entirely dependent on mining, timber and agriculture.

Black's quizzical mindset was the majority view. Before leaving the mountain top, Smith took photographs. They each signed a piece of paper and put this record into a photographic film tin that they stuffed inside a crevice of the trig station's wooden base. This was an occasion that warranted ceremony, however slight. The handful of white climbers who'd conquered the summit had come, then left, confident they would not forget what they saw from this peak, but had turned to other dreams, other mountains, the demands of careers and family. Smith and the Weindorfers could not leave it alone.

Instead of retracing their steps for a speedy descent, the party struck out in a westerly direction, determined to explore as much as they could of the surrounding topography before dark, Gustav's step springier than usual, Kate behind him, swept along in his wake. Doubts that might have flickered through her mind about the soundness of their plan or a nagging suspicion the dream might subside once back on the lowlands did not stand a chance. A man of action, Gustav sped forth, for if he'd dithered on the journey he'd taken to this point, to this place in a corner of a rugged island so far from his birthplace, he'd have missed his window. The very next morning, he and Ron went searching for a suitable site to build an accommodation house mirroring the hospices he and Kate had seen at Buffalo.

On the north-west slope of Cradle Valley stood a rocky rise overlooking open grassy country on one side, a shadowy, moist forest of pine, myrtle and sassafras trees on the other. A creek that would supply good water tinkled over rocks on its way to the Dove River. Mentioning the stream in an article he later wrote, Gustav quoted a verse by Alfred, Lord Tennyson: 'For men may come and men may go but I go on forever.' 

Big dreams

Gustav's enthusiasm bubbled in geyser spurts as he drew on their experience of Mt Buffalo to imagine how this great wilderness could be shared, for tourism, for science, for all. He tossed around ideas for a national park, an accommodation hostel, one idea on top of the other like the boulders of the crag they stood upon, overtaken by the urge to showcase what they could see, not simply for profit or personal gain, since their appreciation of the natural sciences dampened hubristic ambition in favour of the universal benefits. The view was sublime, but far above the picturesque sway of this place was their sense of the knowledge embedded here.

Kate and Gustav had been shaped by a convergence of events and experiences not unlike the subterranean pressures altering the

NEED TO KNOW

This is an edited extract from *Kindred: A Cradle Mountain Love Story* by Kate Legge (The Miegunyah Press), available now. mup.com.au



Loving the Blue Mountain views.



MOUNTAIN PRIDE

Sara Freeland of the Freeland Hiking Co loves to share the beauty of the Blue Mountains.



MY earliest bushwalking memory is walking the Grand Canyon Track in the Blue Mountains. My family used to holiday in Leura once a year, and I must have been only 7 or 8 when we walked it for the first

time. I remember the incredible greenness of everything and the magical-like fairy grottos of the fern gullies and how small I felt standing in the canyon. I also remember lots of stairs.

I got into the walking tour business after having the standard quarter-life crisis a few years back and took some time off work to walk Tassie's Overland Track on a guided trip. I'd recently discovered my love for mountains, but I wasn't at all equipped or skilled enough to do something on my own, so a guided tour was the perfect chance to get out for a week and (perhaps) figure out what I was doing with my life.

Lucky for me, my two guides were fabulous, and they both took the time to share their personal experiences of their job and lifestyle as a guide. Not only was the walk breathtaking, but it was a huge catalyst for change in my life and launched my career in the outdoors. I found out that there was an Adventure Tour Guiding course starting in Hobart in two weeks, so I applied, got accepted, packed up my life in Sydney and moved – all in less than 10 days.

It was without a doubt, the best eight months on my life – an incredibly eye-opening, brain-expanding experience. I finally found where I belonged, and I was even so passionate and enthusiastic about the course that I was awarded Student of the Year!

The primary destination for Freeland Hiking Co. tours is the Blue Mountains in NSW. It's such a majestic landscape, with near perpendicular cliffs, deep valleys and wild rivers. It's home to over 250km of walking tracks spread out over 250 million hectares of wilderness. You can find an incredibly abundant array of flora and fauna and there is also some superb (literally, with the superb lyrebird a common sight) birdlife for the twitchers out there.

The Blue Mountains is well-covered regarding tours and guided experiences, but Freeland Hiking Co. is the first dedicated expedition style hiking company. We don't offer day trips, but instead take people deeper into nature, with trips ranging from 2-5 days in length. The lookout at Echo Point and Scenic World offer fantastic glimpses of the landscape but don't allow you to develop that more profound connection with the bush, or to really switch off and enjoy the silence. I believe the only way to truly experience a destination, is to weave through it on foot and spend a night out underneath a blanket of stars.

People often underestimate their own strength and abilities, or they are nervous about wearing a pack, etc. But hiking is one of the most fundamental human movements and our bodies are designed to walk long distances and carry weight on our backs. When people reach the top of any mountain, it's fantastic to see their face light up as the overwhelming sense of achievement starts to flood their body.

I don't run boot-camp style tours. Instead, we move at a slow pace and spend a lot of the day watching, listening and just experiencing the beauty of nature. It's not uncommon

“WE TAKE PEOPLE DEEPER INTO NATURE, WITH TRIPS RANGING FROM 2-5 DAYS IN LENGTH.”

for people to ask things like “when are we leaving?”, “when do we get to camp?” or “what are we doing next?”.

They simply can't resist trying to plan the day in their heads and struggle to relinquish control of their time. I'm the same. It takes me at least a few hours every time I go into the bush to really relax and start to enjoy the silence. This is why I wanted to focus on offering overnight tours only, so everyone can spend at least one night out underneath the stars and experience the incredible inner stillness that comes from spending time in nature. 🌀

Need to know: freelandhikingco.com.au

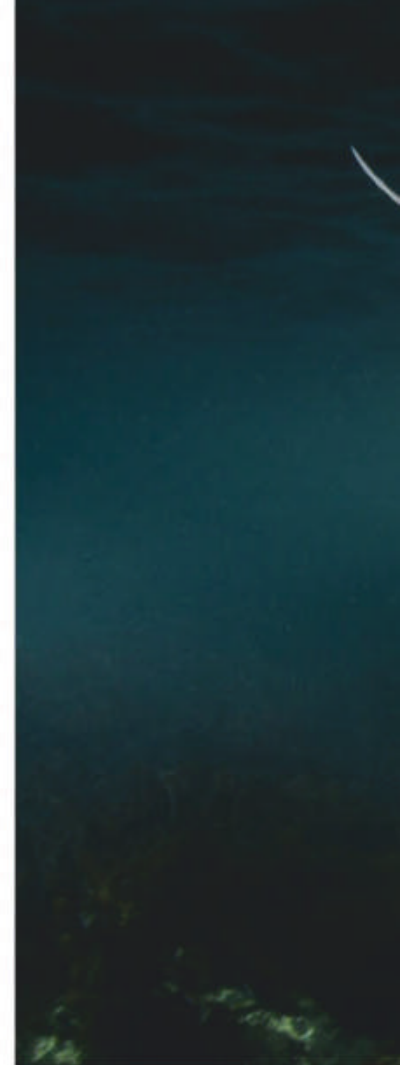


PHOTO FINISH

The Sony World Photography Awards showcase beautiful and dramatic images. Here are some of our favourites.

Flower on the sea.

Photographer:

Trung Pham Huy.

Trung: "People in Phu Yen province, in central Vietnam, use nets in anchovy fishing season. From the air the nets look like floating flowers on the sea."



(Untitled).

Photographer:

Greg Lecoeur

Greg: "For many years grey seals have been hunted. They are now protected but continue to suffer from unintentional catches, poaching and pollution. In Great Britain's Farne Island archipelago, they happily cohabit with humans."



A red river of faith. Photographer: Lifeng Chen

Lifeng: "Thousands of women Buddhists line up the hillside to go to the mountains to practice the dharma, which is called Da Yuan Sheng Hui, in Sichuan, China."



Kerlingarfjöll.

Photographer: Arvids Baranovs

Arvids: "Exploring the otherworldly geothermal area of Kerlingarfjöll, Icelandic Highlands. I had my friend run forward and stand on the clay hill for scale. It was very loud due to numerous geysers spewing water, mud and smoke, so we communicated via radio."



Winning the championship.

Photographer: Kwan Wai Pang

Kwan: "Fengshun Puzhai Huolong is a 300-year-old cultural activity in Guangdong, China. The 'fire dragon' is made up of wire, bamboo, paper and filled with thousands of fireworks. A fire dragon consists of 30-40 young shirtless young hands, plus drummers, lobsters, goldfish and other people, the entire team of more than 200 people."



The Harvest.

Photographer: Dikpal Thapa

Dikpal: "I got stung by one of the largest bees in the world and I had already killed 7 or 8 bees then I noticed hunters around me calmly picking the bees off their body and throwing them away. They didn't kill them. I didn't ask why but understood the purpose we were there – for harvesting the wild honey from the hives of Himalayan bees, not to kill."



Underwater Gannets.

Photographer: Tracey Lund

Tracey: "Whilst on Scotland's Shetland Islands, the thing I wanted to do most was photograph the gannets as they feed underwater. The photography takes place at sea around some of Shetland's remotest headlands. It was an unbelievable experience."

GREAT
OVERNIGHT
WALKS

SYDNEY'S
BEST FIVE

AN OVERNIGHT TO REMEMBER

Great Walks looks at five of Sydney's best easy-access overnight walks.

WORDS AND PHOTOS_JAMES STUART

SYDNEY is a city full of opportunities, especially when it comes to national parks. However, my newly found passion for overnight bushwalks has coincided with parenthood and my most time-poor period to date. Determined not to let this challenge hold me back, I decided to seek out five of Sydney's best weekend walks. My only criteria: they had to be accessible by public transport and I had to be home in time for a family dinner on Sunday.

Right: Huge angophoras dominate the bush leading down to Kingfisher Pool.





North Era Beach is the Coast Track's only designated campground.



The Coast Track, Royal NP

No survey of Sydney's overnight walks is complete without the iconic trail that links up the townships of Bundeena and Otford in Australia's first national park. I completed the walk with my oldest friend John. It was his first overnight hike.

We met up at Cronulla before jumping on a quaint ferry to Bundeena, where a brief walk through quiet streets took us to the track head. Soon, the service trail emerged onto the white sandstone cliffs overlooking Little Marley Beach. The walk ahead panned out in front of us: a series of massive, heath-covered headlands that jutted out into wild ocean. Each would hide secluded bays and beaches, and paths lined by flowering banksia, pig face and pea flowers.

The walking conditions were not particularly pleasant, however, with a howling southerly in full swing. We relished the shelter of north-facing cliffs and hills, knowing we would be almost blown off our feet when we crested them. By the time we arrived at the North Era beach campground, our skin was salt-crusted from sea spray.

Though day two was much shorter, we were on the road shortly after sunrise in a light drizzle. The wind had dropped and we enjoyed the more verdant landscape of this section. Arriving at Otford gave us a great sense of satisfaction as we gazed north at the dark cliff lines that zig-zagged back to Bundeena. And what did John make of his first overnight hike? Despite a knee injury and some serious pain, he was hooked.

Kingfisher Pool, Heathcote NP

This modest walk is short, lands at a beautiful swimming hole and is home to ecosystems that feel remarkably untouched. With that in mind, I decided to make it my daughter Marilla's first overnight walk. I had enlisted a couple of mates and their boys to join us in late Spring, a first for them too. The 1.8km track to Kingfisher Pool from Waterfall leads down some level steps before heading down a steep rocky path, which required the odd bit of hand holding.

The campground sits right next to Heathcote Creek and features a very-handly picnic table surrounded by a few tent sites and a pit toilet. After a sweaty walk, the kids' mind was on one thing only: a swim in Kingfisher Pool. After pitching tents, we walked to a serene body of water bounded by angophoras and scrub on one side and a natural rock amphitheatre on the other.

I swam out with Marilla on my back through surprisingly warm water. We perched on a submerged, flat boulder and looked back at the sandstone formations, lit up by late afternoon sun.

We woke at dawn the next day and went for another swim before breaking camp. The children were happy to explore Heathcote creek's rock platforms while we packed, sliding down a small opening into a cave that emerged a few metres downstream.

Getting three exhausted children up the trail, required cajoling and negotiation. But watching them completely connected with nature is an experience I want to relive again and again.

“WE WERE SWEATY BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED AT THE LOOKOUT, FROM WHERE WE COULD SEE BEROWRA CREEK SNAKE BACK TO ITS SOURCE.”

Glenbrook to Springwood, Blue Mountains

Up until this walk, the lower Blue Mountains had just been a pit stop as we drove to Blackheath or Katoomba. Boy, was I missing out? Desperate to fit in a solo walk before the arrival of summer, I alighted at Glenbrook Station one Saturday morning and walked down to Blue Pool, a popular swimming spot. Several groups were returning after a dip to escape a sweltering November day. Though conditions were harsh, I soon found myself entranced by a gorge landscape that felt so remote it was hard to believe suburbia sat only a few kilometres to the East.

Scrambling along the overgrown and at times indistinct bush track that contours Glenbrook Creek, I then climbed to St Helena Ridge before descending back into Glenbrook Gorge. Here I would camp for the night in a sandy clearing next to the creek.

Along the way, fields of flannel flowers were in bloom across the ridge. The heat was bearable thanks to shaded spots and plentiful water in the creek (treated before drinking). Sandy beaches and dramatic escarpment emerged around one bend or the next.

I hadn't seen a single person since leaving Blue Pool: the campsite and an experience of utter peace were mine alone as I drank a glass of shiraz, watching light drain from the ridge above me.

The next day, I woke to cooler temperatures and clear skies before tackling another overgrown track, cut off by fallen trees at semi-regular intervals. Walking through rainforest, I followed sassafras trees out of the gorge, before re-emerging in Springwood. This was one of the most stunning walks I've ever done and the impression still endures. It's hard to believe I could get there by public transport in under two hours.

Right: Glenbrook Gorge in the spectacular Lower Blue Mountains.

3



Mt Kuring-gai to Brooklyn, Kuring-gai Chase NP

'Normally, if you told me to walk up that hill,' said John as we eyed off the unforgiving 200m ascent towards Naa Badu lookout near Berowra, 'I'd tell you to get stuffed.'

And this was only the first ascent of the estimated 1650m in store for us. My rock-climbing partner Garry had joined us. From Mt Kuring-gai station, we followed a trail down to Calna Creek before passing an expansive salt marsh, skirted by casuarinas.

We were sweaty by the time we arrived at the lookout, from where we could see Berowra Creek snake back to its source. The trail descended to Berowra Waters, which held the promise of a short ferry ride to a cafe. Knowing our ridge-top campsite was dry, we stocked up on water before tackling 350m of climbing with heavy packs.

The next morning we stopped at Cowan's general store for a bacon and egg roll, having walked into and out of the most striking rainforest gully to this point. From there the climbs just kept coming. John's knee gave out again and Garry and I ended up dividing most of his pack between us.

By the time we emerged onto the fire trail to Brooklyn, we were all suffering. The fire trail proved to be somewhat monotonous and concluded with a ridiculously steep descent. The flip side? Cold beer at the Anglers Rest Hotel on the shores of the Hawkesbury River and the knowledge that we had walked through a prehistoric landscape that seems utterly impenetrable when viewed from a speeding car on the F3.

Left: Berowra's ridge-top campsite affords spectacular sunset views.

Uloola Falls Walk, Royal NP

Even though they are in the same national park, the contrast between this walk and the Coast Track could not be starker. While the latter features grandiose cliff-top views, Uloola Falls takes you into hidden forest gullies, over tree-lined ridges and past the striking serenity of Karloo Pool. Connecting Heathcote and Waterfall stations, the walk could easily be completed as a day walk but I decided to make this my first solo overnighter.

Karloo Pool is the definite highlight: a small creek flows over rock into a perfectly still, deep pool from the edge of which rises a steep, forested hill. I ate lunch here in solitude, alone except for a rock warbler flitting around me.

A few kilometres further lies Uloola Falls campground and its six bush sites. From the top of the falls that night, I watched dark clouds skim above the bush and imagined the sea that lay beyond them.

The walk out followed a sandy fire trail. While fire trails are never as wild an experience as off-track or bush track walking, it had rained that morning and a heavy fog now settled around me, lending an eerie presence to the heath and forest. A few hours later, I would step off the train and join the family for lunch.

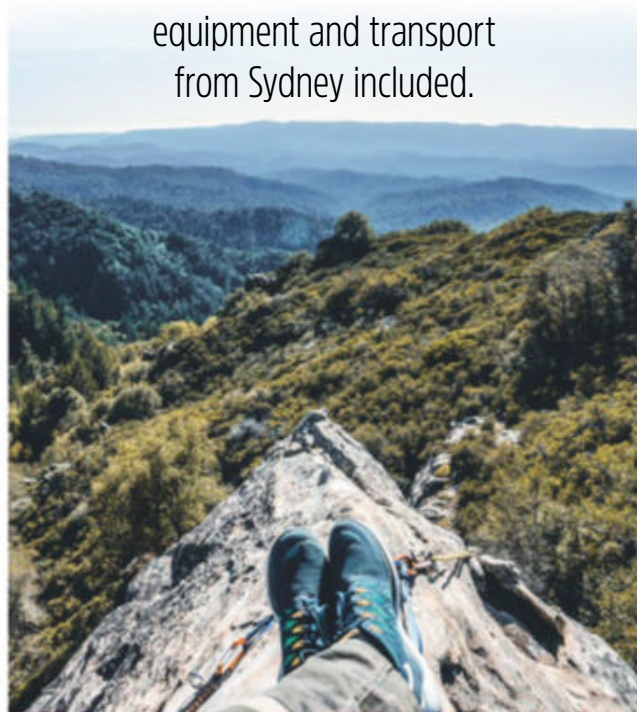
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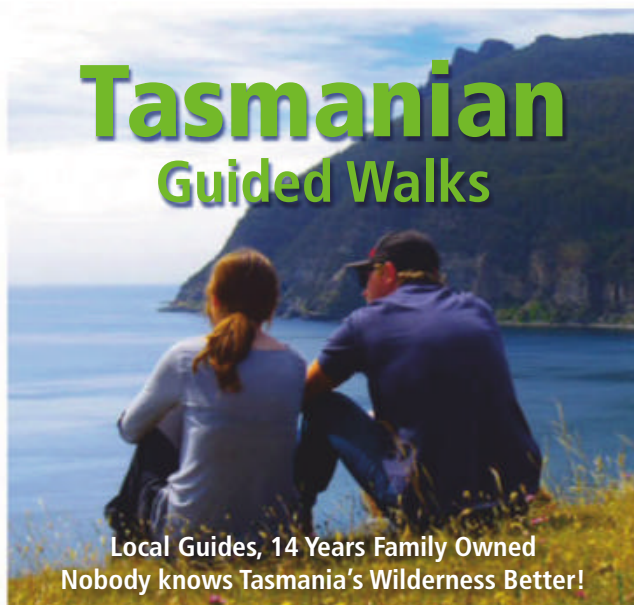
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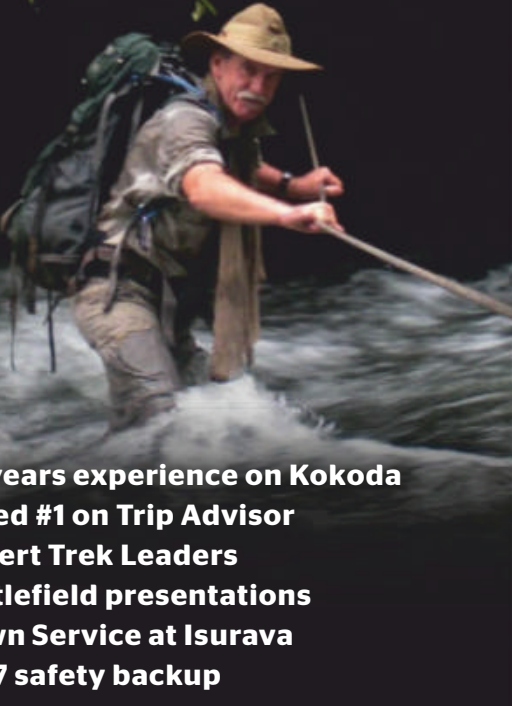
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SCREEN SAVER

John gives a quick rundown on using a GPS receiver loaded with maps.



“DIGITAL MAPS CAN BE PURCHASED AND PLACED ONTO GPS RECEIVERS.”



WORDS JOHN CHAPMAN

John has climbed, guided and walked in many countries. He is best known as the author of walking guide books.

A Global Positioning System receiver (GPS) are used by many outdoor people for navigation. They have some advantages over traditional methods of map and compass as they work well in all weather conditions and they can record where you have been. While they display a position to a metre, hand held GPS units generally have a horizontal accuracy ranging from 10 to 15 metres. For most outdoor uses this is enough accuracy unless you are looking for geocaches.

Digital maps can be purchased and placed onto GPS receivers. While being very useful, often these maps don't show some walking tracks and other details and there is often a need to relate GPS readings to a paper map. The default settings for new GPS units are 'Degrees/Minutes/Seconds' for Position Format and 'WGS84' for Map Datum, these will need to be changed to match paper map settings. By aligning your GPS with maps means you now have both means of navigation working together.

Paper maps use a rectangular numeric grid as if they used degrees/minutes/seconds, the grid would be a series of curved tapering lines. Using straight grids makes it easier to interpolate positions between lines. Each map has the same grid as its neighbour so the grids flow together. However, at some stage, the longitude grid lines start to slope noticeably and not point north. The solution used by map makers is to stop the grid there and create a new 'zone' with a new grid and the pattern gets repeated. Crossing zone boundaries is a rare occurrence when walking but it does happen on some walks in Australia such as the Light to Light Walk near Bega in NSW and in the Otway Ranges in Victoria.


To further complicate map grids, many countries created their own grid system. Many of them use the same system but it helps to be aware that they are not all the same. Over time, some countries have also changed their grid system so you need to know which system the map is using.

All GPS units can show map grids. For a Garmin, open 'Setup' then 'Position Format'. Set 'Map Datum' first as most maps show this somewhere. This sets the zero point for the degree/minutes/seconds reading. The most common is WGS84 which is essentially the same as GDA94 which is used for recent

maps in Australia. For older Australian maps, AGD66 applies and this results in around a 200m difference in position.

The other setting is 'Position Format' which is the actual grid system setting. The most common setting used is UTM (or UPS) and in Australia try that first. If you scroll through the list you will find a large number of country dependent grids. New Zealand has two grids and depending which map versions you have you might try both.

In a new area or country, I do this setup at a known location such as the end of the road, a hut or track junction. It can take a few minutes to find the correct settings but is worth doing.

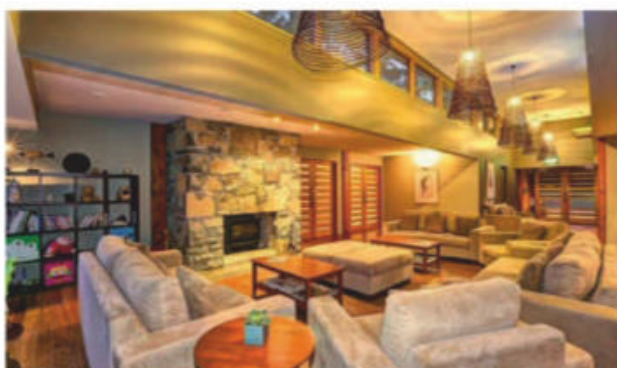
The GPS grid reading will show something like 55H 9812345 6789123 which is a grid location to a 1m accuracy. To extract the conventional six figure grid reference simply drop the last 2 digits from both numbers and take the next 3 digits. This will give a grid position to within 100m which for most purposes is adequate. The grid reference for the above GPS reading is GR 123891. Most government maps show how a grid reference is derived by including an example. 

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